

DEERFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

1967 - FIFTY YEARS AND COUNTING - 2017

Meeting Minutes – **June 11, 2018**

Members Present: Haley Andreozzi, Serita Frey, Kate Hartnett, Ben Minerd
Members Absent: Wes Golomb, Erick Berglund
Visitors: None

Serita Frey called the meeting to order at 7:03

Reservation Rd:

At the request of the Deerfield BOS, DCC evaluated the conservation value of parcels 418-25 (23 acres), 418-26 (5.7 acres) and 418-62 (76 acres) located off Reservation Rd. Members reviewed the seven *Criteria for Acquisition and Protection of Open Space* contained in the 2010 Deerfield Open Space Plan (DOSP).

Priorities within which the parcels fit are listed as follows:

- ***Lands within the most current Green Infrastructure Open Space Network:***
Based on the new draft of the Southern NH Planning Commission (SNHPC) map of the green infrastructure and the 2010 Deerfield Open Space Plan (DOSP), it appears that about 1/3 of 418-62 is within the green infrastructure, and 418-25 and 418-26 are within the green infrastructure nearly in their entirety.
- ***Protect Deerfield's most sensitive natural areas, including prime wetlands, aquifers, vernal pools, streams and lakes, wildlife habitats (including wildlife corridors), old forest stands, and agricultural soils to protect the environment and to balance growth and development with quality of life:***
The parcels form wildlife corridors (both highest ranked in NH and in supporting landscape) as identified in the 2010 Wildlife Action Plan and protect wildlife habitats and the Lamprey River
- ***Connect un-fragmented areas with guidance based on local knowledge from residents, scientists, and land trusts:***
Large portions are in undeveloped riparian zones and part of unfragmented blocks greater than 500 acres
- ***Continue to work with land trusts and state and federal agencies to develop a natural greenway and trail system consisting of public and private protected lands linking Bear Book State Park, Pawtuckaway State Park and Northwood Meadows State Park:***
There is potential linkage to Pawtuckaway State Park. Map 418-62 abuts the 154 acre Longview School parcel (418-53) which abuts Pawtuckaway State Park.

Additional criteria considered from the DOSP which apply to these parcels:

- **Potential linkages to existing open space** to recreation facilities and similar areas in adjacent communities.
- **Environmental sensitivity and importance of the parcel:** Proximity to the Lamprey River tributaries and wildlife corridors. Occupies important location between wetland areas.
- **Existing threat of continued development:** Two of the three parcels have significant road frontage, subject to development pressure
- **Outdoor recreation potential:** Hunting, hiking, walking and skiing.
- **Cost and availability of the parcel:** Being taken by the Town by tax deed.
- **The financial impact:** Cost of residential services vs. open space costs and benefits resulting from removing the parcel from development
- **Aesthetic benefits to the general public** and the preservation of the Town character

The above form a compelling argument for taking the properties for conservation purposes. Serita Frey will inform the BOS of the results of DCC's review and opinion that it would benefit the town to retain these properties for conservation.

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Easements and Land Protection

Project #31 – Marston Farm: Serita Frey, Kate Hartnett, Dan Kern, Gile Beye and Sean and Michelle Labrie met to discuss forest access. Chair Frey explained that the three parcels involved are the 128 acre conserved parcel being donated to the Town by Gile Beye, the 38 acre parcel being placed under a LCHIP conservation easement, and the 15 acre parcel owned by Sean and Michelle Labrie. The goal is to reunite the parcels to once again become a working farm. Recognizing that upon completion of the project, **the 128 acre parcel would lack suitable access for logging**, forester Charlie Moreno, who prepared the 2003 Marston Farm forest management plan, was consulted, and **the parties have come to an understanding.**

Although an agreement was reached to accommodate forest access, **the matter of public access is still being explored.** The ideal solution will strike a balance between competing interests: allowing for public access while protecting landowner privacy, and preserving the property's character and ability to operate as a working farm. Most public access will be via trails. There is not time to develop specific language for the deed; the intent is to require **locating public trails in a manner that would minimize impacts to wildlife by using the NH Fish and Game planning process** before the easement has to be completed. The **easement language will be left flexible so the process can be used in the future.** A good working draft of the deed should be available for review by the end of June. The NH Fish and Game trail language is being added to the updated deed for the 128 acre tract and Kate Hartnett will be sharing the information with Steve Walker, the Director of the LCIP Conservation Land Stewardship Program.

Project #35: – Epsom/Deerfield Joint Town Project: There are two parcels on the Deerfield side of this project. The parcel with frontage on Griffin Rd. is currently conserved under a fairly restrictive *Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) easement that lacks a right-of-way for access to the abutting back, land-locked parcel for forestry and public access.* Serita Frey has contacted the NRCS in order to determine what could be allowed under the current easement. The matter of access to the backland would be an issue regardless of the ownership of the WRP parcel and any special permissions granted by NRCS would need to be periodically renewed. As it now stands, access to the back parcel would need to be through the Hart Town Forest or from the abutting Epsom conservation easements.

Given the restrictive nature of, and permanent protection afforded by, the NRCS easement on the WRP parcel, members questioned the marketability of the parcel, and likewise the wisdom of spending scarce conservation funds on its purchase. On the other hand, it was felt that acquisition of the back lot would be an excellent use of the Town's conservation dollars. In view of its linkage to the Epsom conserved areas, the backland would provide the public recreational opportunities that are a conservation priority and add to the unfragmented block within the Lamprey Headwaters.

Although the WRP parcel was considered to be a highly desirable wetland area with its waterfowl and amphibian life, **the members decided that in order to be good stewards to the Town, the focus should be placed on purchasing and conserving only the back parcel.** It was noted that a donation of the WRP parcel would certainly strengthen the LCHIP proposal that is being written for the project.

Town Forest Protection – Boisvert Town Forest: Members discussed the need for an addition to the reserved rights in the easement deed to hold open the option of a parking/public access point. Given the landlocked location, currently there is no viable alternative for vehicle access. The easement language needs to be more general than typical in the absence of frontage on a Town road.

Approval of Minutes: A motion by Serita Frey to approve the **minutes of the May 11th regular meeting** was followed with a second by Ben Miner. The motion passed with Ms. Andreozzi abstaining.

Finance: In Mr. Berglund's absence, there was no report. The **balance in the conservation fund at the end of March was \$404,967.42.**

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Resident Concern – Ritchie Rd.: Serita Frey received an email from a resident expressing concern about the potential siting of a vehicle repair business on a lot in close proximity to Pleasant Lake. The resident was advised to attend the scheduled Deerfield Planning Board (DPB) public hearing. There is concern that the requested use may be incompatible with the site due to the presence of sandy, permeable areas and potential ground water impacts. The DPB hearing was being continued subsequent to the June 10th site visit.

Eversource Utility Work – Conditional Use Permit Application:

Kate Hartnett reported that a productive conversation resulted from a **visit to the site of the proposed electric utility structure replacement. Attending were Kate Hartnett, Matthew Cardin (Eversource), David Price (DES Land Resources Management), Dave Doran (Deerfield Planning Board) and resident Jim Page.** Eversource recently applied to the Planning Board for a conditional use permit (CUP) for the work and previously met with the DCC regarding their plans. Noted were three main areas where Eversource is impacting rights-of-way in Deerfield:

1. Transmission Rights-of-Way (structure replacement)
2. Land Clearing, (especially around the substation)
3. Vegetative Management (mechanized process of controlling vegetation).

All three have had significant impacts to wetlands and wildlife in the past. Anticipating future substantial increases in construction in the rights-of-way, DES, DCC and Planning Board are striving for an improved process of communication and project management with Eversource, especially in the area of accountability. Improvement is also sought in the previously automated processing of Eversource Utility Maintenance Notifications with DES.

Kate Hartnett will draft a letter to the Planning Board, on behalf of the DCC, highly recommending that a trained, certified wildlife monitor be required to perform daily sweeps of the work site to identify the presence of reptiles, amphibians or other rare, threatened or endangered species, regardless of whether they are identified in the Natural Heritage Bureau documentation (serendipitously, a painted turtle hatchling was discovered on the site during the visit). The letter will also request that Eversource be encouraged to voluntarily follow protocols similar to those required in Massachusetts that include annual training for turtle protection and other at-risk species. Eversource did respond to DCC's May 23rd memo; however, their answers did not fully address DCC concerns

Brown's Mill: Kate Hartnett will be following up with the attorney for the Brown's Mill subdivision about the failure to hydro seed the gravel pit with warm season grasses as agreed. Ms. Hartnett will also request a recorded copy of the deed. The gated access through Brown's Mill to the Corey Wildlife Management Area has been improved by NHFG, per DPB subdivision plans.

Invasives: Phragmites continues to be a problem in Deerfield. In an effort to find a solution, Ms. Hartnett will once again attempt to find a licensed/certified applicator. Ms. Andreozzi will also reach out to her contacts.

NHACC Grant – Deerfield Community School/DCC Collaboration: Serita Frey announced that Ellen O'Donnell's students will give their final presentation on the project in Stratham, NH on Tuesday, June 19th from 4:30 to 6:30 pm. All are welcome to attend.

A copy of correspondence was received from the Rockingham County Conservation District announcing a pilot project for free invasive plant management on municipal working lands. A copy was given to the Deerfield Highway Department.

Serita Frey adjourned the meeting at 8:56 pm.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 9, 2018

(Please check the website for scheduling changes)

townofdeerfieldnh.com

These minutes were prepared and submitted by Judy Marshall. Revisions, if any, will be contained in the minutes of the next meeting. If amended, a revised version will be posted to the website, after approval by the Deerfield Conservation Commission