

Meeting Minutes

ENFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING

09/05/13

September 5, 2013

Present: Alan Strickland, Chair, Jeanine King, Dwight Marchetti, Steve Schneider, Sue Hagerman; Shirley Green

Excused: Gary Gaudette, Phil King

Guest: Erhard Frost

Meeting called to order at 7:00 PM

August Minutes:

Dwight requested the August Minutes be changed to show that Ben Kilham's fee is \$250 (not \$200 as written), as previously approved. Also, add back in Dwight's statement made at the previous meeting about the illegality of voting by proxy, in reference to Alan's mention of Sue Hagerman's absentee vote in favor of the motion to approve funding for the management plan.

Motion made by Alan to accept August, 2013 minutes as amended. Seconded. Passed. One abstention.

Meeting will be open for public hearing to consider the disbursement of money from the Conservation Fund to hire forester Erhard Frost to do an inventory of the Town conserved land along Bicknell Brook. The inventory would aid future management decisions for the property.

Introduction of Erhardt Frost.

Motion made by Dwight to open meeting for public hearing, seconded by Jeanine. Steve pointed out that when you open up a meeting for public hearing it is customary under the rules to read the notice. Jeanine read the notice off the Town's website. RSA 36-A

The public hearing began with Erhardt Frost saying he was there to answer questions. A discussion ensued, precipitated by Dwight, elaborating on the reasons for doing a management plan. In answer to Dwight's question, Mr. Frost said that there was no easement on the land, and no reason to do a management plan unless the town wants to achieve some outcomes. He explained that conservation easement mandates that you have a management plan drawn up by a professional, including objectives, etc.... If you choose to be active in your management of the land, you would need to formulate a plan that includes inventorying of assets. It can be cursory or more comprehensive, depending on what is required. Erhardt's answer to Dwight's other question about walking the land before doing a management plan was "not necessarily." In a typical case involving municipal work, the Conservation Commission defines the objectives, sometimes including public input, and then the project is undertaken.

The discussion turned to cost details, in reference to previous letters from Mr. Frost. He explained that the cost is based on the amount of detail included, which could be a lesser or an in-depth amount. He clarified that the stated \$5,500 is for a comprehensive plan with a timber, flower, and wetlands, site assessment. It's not the Rolls Royce, but it's not the Kia. Dwight referred to Erhardt's May letter to Alan in which he mentions "elements". The explanation was that the CC could request that information, but it doesn't have to be done. The purpose of having it done would be to give him, as a forestry manager, the information to offer his client a more informed prescription about the site. Dwight asked what the cost would be if they were just interested in the tree aspect. The answer was \$3,500 - \$4,000. It is easier to compile the data with the newer inventory programs.

Dwight asked if the **Por** property was a part of this, to which Steve answered "no", and that we have an easement from the Upper Valley Land Trust.

The discussion turned to a discussion of what other aspects of the land would be inventoried, with Sue asking if wildlife would be assessed, questioning whether hunters would be given an idea of what was there. Erhardt explained that bears and deer are common, but beyond that the inventory would list other creatures. He said that you can manipulate vegetation to favor certain species, such as game birds, but when you do that you work against other species. He prefers to create as diverse a landscape of species as possible, which makes them more resilient to change due to snow, ice, etc... he became aware of how many plants you can have from his time working with a botanist. He would put all this information in a document that would become the baseline. In the future people would be able to look at this and see what was and what is. Dwight asked how many years he had been doing this, how many management plans he had done, and whether any of those had involved a grant process.. Mr. Frost answered "37 years", and "too many to count", and yes about the grants, with Lebanon as one example, but he wasn't sure about the extent of the funding. Dwight said he had

done some research about the New Hampshire Conservation Commission, who had ordered almost \$300,000 in conservation grants to fifteen recipients.

Dwight turned the discussion to a letter from the state forester, and asked if, in Erhardt's opinion, most of the comprehensive reports he did were for information. The answer was yes, but that they were defined by the goals of the organization. He said he would give us a stewardship assessment form to fill out, to decide what the CC would like to do. He said it would rank the goals and objectives. If your concern is more about keeping the brook clean and get the timber revenue, you would rank those items as primary. Identifying the goals and objectives become key at the point that you get to the prescriptive part of the plan that identifies what and how you want to proceed. If you want to do something, timber harvest has the biggest impact. That is really where you need a defined plan based on data to know what to do. Shirley asked if it would make it possible for future commissions to have a different outlook on it, and manipulate it? Mr. Frost said yes, and that what you do on the ground is going to be based on whatever any group decides to do in terms of accepting any part of a plan. It's really a guide.

Alan indicated that the discussion needed to be wrapped up as one of the Commission members needed to leave, asking if there were any other questions. Steve stated that questions needed to be asked before the public hearing was closed, because after it is closed the vote will take place.

Shirley brought up the questions people are asking about why the town is spending money on this, when there is a county forester who should be able to do it without a fee. Alan answered that he had asked him about that, and that the county forester isn't able to develop the land for us because it takes too much time. He'd never have the time to address every individual landowner if he did individual assessments. He does hands-on work on county land, but wouldn't be able to keep up with demand if he did it for municipalities.

Shirley asked when the commission would decide on which direction to go in based on the plan, as everyone has different views about how to manage the property. Sue said that that's where the survey would come into play. Erhardt asked if harvesting had been discussed at the Selectboard meeting. Steve said it wasn't brought up specifically, but that they see the management plan as necessary to fully utilizing the land. Erhardt referred to the easement wording that makes presenting a management plan to the UVLT necessary before anything can be done to the land. Dwight clarified that they have to give their blessing.

The remainder of the discussion turned to costs and alternative funding sources, with Dwight updating Sue about the research he did on grants handed out by New Hampshire Conservation Commission to other groups. His understanding is that it is a continuous fund with varying amounts. He stated that he wasn't against doing the management plan, but rather against spending the money if there are alternative sources. There are also funds available online. Jeanine asked if there was a plan to write a grant to obtain the funding. Erhardt said there used to be money for management plans, but the last Farm Bill took municipalities out of the mix. Shirley said, that as a town budget committee member, she sees \$5,000 as a lot of money, to which Jeanine asked how long the commission was going to hang on to the money on hand, and for what purpose. Sue read from an online source about grants available, timelines, and authorizations needed. She said that grant funds become available at the end of November, in response to Dwight's related question. She further read that agreements are drafted between January and March, reviewed by AG and AGE at the end of April, with projects beginning by May 2014. Erhardt said that this project wouldn't begin until May or June of next year, as it is too late to begin now, and he would get a better look at the plants in the spring.

Jeanine asked what would happen if we voted to disburse the funds and then got a grant. Steve said the commission would authorize the appropriate 'up to \$ amount', and if grant money is obtained, only the money needed would be spent. He offered to put together the grant, and pointed out that it is helpful when the board says they are willing to put in some money as well. A 50/50 match is typical, or some in-kind contribution.

**Motion to close the public hearing made by Jeanine. Seconded by Sue. All in favor, Aye.
Public hearing is closed (Alan)**

**Jeanine moves that we authorize the expenditure of up to \$5,500 for the inventory management plan.
Alan seconds the motion. Open for discussion.**

Dwight stated that there is grant money available, and that he is not in favor of the motion as stated. He would be in favor of the motion if it is amended to add grant funding possibility. Jeanine responded that the wording of "up to \$5,500" is in the event a grant is obtained. Dwight explained that the reason he did the research was to see if there were other funds available to defray the costs, and urged everyone to do the same thing to look

for funds. His feeling is that, while the money in the CC account is not on the tax rolls, it started out as tax payer money. Sue said that one option would be to offer an amendment to the original motion to include the pursuit of one or more grants to help defray the cost. It was stated that September 27th is the deadline for the grant application under discussion, to which Steve said he was willing to help with the grant. He also stated that there was no need to put a time limit on this process, in as by approving the motion, the CC is approving the withdrawal of the money if needed for a future forest management plan for Bicknell Brook. It doesn't say that we are hiring Erhardt Frost; it just says that the Conservation Commission is saying it is a good commitment. Erhardt pointed out that foundations want to see that the town is willing to ante up some money as well, when applying for grants, to which Steve added that there are two things that foundations state: 1. community is willing to put some match; 2. Regional effort as in the more participants the better.

Steve reminded the committee that Jeanine asked if they were ready to move to the vote.

No friendly amendment.

Alan reminded everyone that there was a motion on the floor:

Request from Dwight to hear the motion again.

Jeanine read the motion again to the group.

Steve stated that approving this motion allows the CC to access these funds in the future. It doesn't mean it has to go ahead and use them.

Dwight asked if another vote would be needed when the time came to decide about using the money.

Steve said yes, but not a public hearing. There would just need to be a vote at the Conservation Commission meeting.

Alan: All in favor of this motion? Aye. Motion passed with two no votes.

Mr. Frost indicated that when the CC is ready, he will come up with a letter of agreement.

Alan confirmed that Steve would put the grant together.

Ben Kilham talk:

- 7:00pm – 9:00pm at the Enfield Community Building. Presentation will probably be about 35 – 40 minutes and then there will be some interaction with the audience. We'll need to get authorization to use the sign in front of the community building, and we'll set up 150 chairs. Help will be needed for cleanup. Mr. Kilham is looking for someone to put something on the town website in advance. Steve will put out a notice right away. A transaction ad will be placed in the Valley News, and a listing in the free Valley News calendar.

Other Business:

- Dwight asked how the line item for Meeting Hearings and Recordings could be increased. He expressed concern about not having enough funds in the budget. The current budget is \$350. As of July 31st we had 45% left. Shirley thought they would have to present it to the Budget committee, but Steve said they don't usually discuss the Conservation Commission budget along with the rest. Dwight asked if the Meeting Hearings and Recordings budget could be increased to \$500. Shirley asked if a vote was needed, and Steve said "no".
 - Shirley reported that she was busy this summer putting together a steering committee for the watershed study grant. She found out that 100,000 to 150,000 would be available next summer, but that the process is very competitive. She had a discussion with [REDACTED], and was told there were things they could focus on, such as an increase in the phosphorous over a time frame. Also, the people on the lake were asked to send her pictures of their areas affected by the storm water runoff and erosion and silt on their properties. She was told that would be good to have for the grant proposal. A very strong and competitive proposal is needed so we don't have to keep resubmitting. We need to think of strategies in the watershed area. Spoke to [REDACTED] about the bridge, who said they didn't want to rebuild it. Shirley said it would have to be rebuilt for access.
- Alan added that he doesn't know what else can be done about the storm water runoff and the silt coming from the bridge, and would like to get an expert. Shirley feels there must be solutions, and she is

working on getting an expert. As someone who was part of the original discussions about the silt problem, during a Crystal Lake 090611 meeting, Shirley asked that she be included in any discussions. Sue asked what she needed to proceed and Shirley said the only thing she can do right now is fill out information and get contacts. We just need to let them know that the CC as a whole supports this. Regarding the Shore land Owner's Guide that the CC voted on but didn't put out because of changes in DES guide, she checked and they still haven't updated it. When they do, she is ready to get it printed and out.

- Sue wants to let the commission show their appreciation of Shirley's work on the watershed study grant application.
- Sue reported that the hike was lovely. Alan hand-whacked a trail across the trails for us to have a good trail. Alan said that coming down Shaker Mountain, the trail and view was fantastic.
- Steve said that last week at the Selectboard meeting, a resident said they are willing to give 39 acres on the Bog road, bordered by wetlands with a gated area on one side. The town is supportive of putting it on the town meeting warrant to take it and hold onto it. There isn't much that can be done to develop it. It depends on whether the resident wants to wait until the town meeting to let go of it. Sue pointed out that it is in our birding territory.

Next meeting will be on November 7th. The October meeting is the Ben Kilham talk.

Motion made by Dwight to adjourn. Seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:40.

Submitted by:

Shelley Geoghegan