

Falmouth Conservation Commission Minutes of February 4, 2008

Meeting convened at 7:03 PM

Members Present: Lissa Robinson, Chair, Caleb Hemphill, Mel Dickenson, Willie Audet, Sean Mahoney, Frank Ruch, Wing Goodale

Liaisons: Lissa Robinson (CPAC), Caleb Hemphill (FTAC, FLT)

Staff: Gary Fogg (consultant)

Monthly Meeting Leader: Wing Goodale

Minutes

The minutes for the meetings of December 11, 2007 and January 7, 2008 were approved.

Membership

The Commission greeted its new member, Sean Mahoney. Unfortunately, Wing Goodale explained that he was stepping down because of other commitments. This will be Wing's last meeting, and thus the Commission will still be down by one member.

Contaminants in Maine's Birds

Wing presented the preliminary findings from a report on contaminants in Maine birds that he prepared on behalf of the Biodiversity Research Institute in Gorham. The research sought to determine if manmade contaminants were present and accumulating in bird species representing terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, as well as in species occupying different trophic levels in the food chain.

Subcommittee Discussions and Reports

Open Space – Mel Dickenson

There has been some discussion as to whether the Open Space Subcommittee should be spun off from the FCC and become an independent standing committee. FCC members discussed this and support this change. Mel says that the members of the Open Space Subcommittee agree that this is appropriate given the number and magnitude of tasks this committee undertakes. However, neither Mel nor the OS members want the process of becoming independent to interfere with their work, as they already have a full agenda. The FCC recommended to Mel that he take up this issue with the Town Council when he and the OS Committee have the time and energy to do so. The FCC will support them when they do.

Mel also discussed the following OS projects underway:

- The River Point Working Group has been reconstituted in order to prepare the management plan for the property.
- The OS Committee is still working on the criteria that distinguish what they are calling "Jewel" properties – those that are not necessarily large but which contain other natural resource and open space values that justify their consideration for some kind of protection.
- The OS Committee is leading the acquisition effort for a property in the northwest corner of Falmouth adjacent to the Lowell Preserve in Windham.
- The Town Council has approved the OS Committee proposed financial plan for conservation, with the exception of requiring that the money raised by selling town property be earmarked

for further acquisition efforts. The Council insists that it retain maximum flexibility in how the money raised from disposing of town land be used.

- The Town Council would like one of the town committees to develop a proposal for a TDR program. Mel was unsure yet whether the OS Committee was the right committee for the job or if it had the time and resources to undertake that work, given the Committee's current workload.

Invasive Species – Caleb Hemphill

Joe Wiley of the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands says that the removal of bittersweet and other invasives at Macworth Island, combined with the loss of trees from windthrow, has created the need for replanting and is wondering if the FCC would like to lead such an effort. The FCC members discussed this opportunity and suggested to Caleb that this is an ideal project for the newly formed Falmouth Conservation Corps. Caleb will talk to Bob Shafto about adding this project to the Conservation Corps annual work plan.

Vernal Pools – Caleb Hemphill

Caleb expects that the Natural Resource Review process will result in new ordinance language on vernal pool protection that is more progressive than the town's current wetlands. He has also discussed the status of the town's vernal pool protection efforts with Aram Calhoun, the University of Maine biologist and researcher who assisted Falmouth in its first vernal pool survey.

Natural Resource Ordinance Review – Lissa Robinson

With the help of its consultants, the joint CDC/CPAC committee handling the project has identified natural resource areas of special concern in Falmouth for which mitigation under town ordinances should be required. These include vernal pools, wetlands, steep slopes, stormwater impacts and surface waters. The committee has also met four times on vernal pools and is looking at protection strategies that protect pools based on their functional value. Protection strategies must also meet the other goals of the natural review process, such as easing the regulatory process for developers and ensuring consistency with state and federal regulations.

Energy Conservation – Mel Dickenson

Mel and Caleb have met with Kathy Breen, Nathan Poore and members of Cool Falmouth to discuss organizational issues. Their current thinking is that it may be helpful to have the project start out as an FCC subcommittee and then have it spin off as an independent committee once it has gained momentum. This would be similar to the way that the FCC incubated the Open Space Committee.

Liaison Discussions and Reports

FLT – Caleb Hemphill

The Portland North Collaborative met at the Falmouth Yacht Club with about 25 people in attendance. The object of the meeting was to discuss adding an executive director and increasing the Collaborative's financial capacity to support its staff. FLT has been a leader in putting the Collaborative together. The participating land trusts share the costs and benefits of staff support more or less equally.

EDC – Willie Audet

Hugh Coxe (CPAC) and Joseph Wroblewski (CDC) will be visiting with the EDC in order to provide an update on the natural resource ordinance review. Willie says that keeping the EDC informed and involved in such ordinance changes can help to avoid a backlash against regulations that are unfair to the development community and ensure greater public support.

Next Steps

Sean Mahoney will lead the March meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 PM

Submitted by Gary Fogg