

Falmouth Conservation Commission
Minutes of March 3, 2008

Meeting convened at 7:24 PM

Members Present: Lissa Robinson, Chair, Caleb Hemphill, Mel Dickenson, Willie Audet, Frank Ruch

Members Absent: Sean Mahoney

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

Staff: Gary Fogg (consultant)

Monthly Meeting Leader: Lissa Robinson

Minutes

The minutes for the meeting of February 4, 2008 were approved.

Report on Town Chairs Meeting

Lissa and Mel attended the Town Chairs meeting and were pleased to learn that most of the improvements in committee operations recommended by the group were already being done by the Conservation Commission. These include better recruitment practices, staggered timing of terms, preparation of action plans, accurate record keeping, and posting agendas and minutes on the Town website.

Subcommittee Discussions and Reports

Energy – Mel Dickenson

- The Town Council has approved a draft order for organization of the committee. The order describes the committee's general organization and purpose. A public hearing on the new committee will follow in March and final approval should be achieved in April.
- Work continues on defining the areas of knowledge and expertise that the committee will need among its members.
- The initial direction of the committee will be to work on improving the energy efficiency of town and school buildings, as well as educational outreach. However, it is expected that the committee will branch out from these first steps to develop other programs that will have an even broader effect within the community.

Open Space – Mel Dickenson

- The River Point Working Group has reviewed the first draft of a management plan for the property.
- The OS Committee has successfully overseen the purchase of the Buck property in the northwest corner of Topsham.
- The OS Committee is now looking into the possible acquisition of two other properties, one near Hadlock Road and one near Ridgewood Estates Subdivision.
- The OS Committee website is up and running.
- The OS Committee is examining a Transfer of Development Rights program as a funding mechanism for open space acquisition. The program will probably operate similar to the one in Gorham, in which a fee is charged for higher density development in designated growth areas

and then using those funds to purchase conservation land and easements in more rural areas. Designated growth areas currently being considered include some commercial and mixed-use zoning districts near Route One and Route 100, but further research is needed.

Invasive Species – Caleb Hemphill

Caleb is still working with Joe Wiley of the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands on planning a day for volunteers to replant forest trees on Macworth Island.

Vernal Pools – Caleb Hemphill

- Aram Calhoun, the University of Maine biologist and researcher who assisted Falmouth in its first vernal pool survey, is using Falmouth's example in her current round of talks on vernal pool protection in other communities.
- Damon Oscarson, the former UMO graduate student who worked on Falmouth's program along with Aram Calhoun, is now the Land Preservation Coordinator for the Westchester Land Trust, in Bedford Hills, New York. Damon called Caleb recently to find out what has happened in Falmouth since he left Maine.
- Bob Shafto is still interested in organizing a symposium on vernal pool protection in concert with Maine Audubon. The information and training would be tailored for other conservation commissions in the MACC.

Planning – Lissa Robinson and Willie Audet

Lissa and Willie met with Theo Holtwick regarding the contribution that the FCC can make to conservation planning during subdivision review by the Planning Board. The group decided to wait and see how the Natural Resources Ordinance Review process turns out before taking further action.

Liaison Discussions and Reports

Falmouth Conservation Corps (FCC) – Caleb Hemphill

Bob Shafto (OS Ombudsman), Skip Varney (Director of Parks and Public Works), David Gagnon (engineer and vernal pool volunteer), Gary Glick (teacher, Falmouth High School), and others met in order to establish an action plan for the newly established FCC. Ideas currently being considered include building trails at the Adams Parcel, control work on invasive species, clearing downed trees and brush from the East and West Branches of the Piscataqua to allow small boat access, rehabilitating the bike trail at Pine Grove, and improvements at the Blackstrap Road canoe launch. The group will meet again at the end of the month. For liability reasons, FCC volunteers will not be allowed to use chain saws or pesticides.

FEDC – Willie Audet

Amanda Stearns (Community Planning Director) and Joe Wroblewski (Chair, Town Council Community Planning Committee) met with about twenty members of the Falmouth Economic Development Commission in order to talk about the relationship between town government and the business community. Erik Wiberg, the current President of the FEDC and an engineer with R.W. Gillespie & Associates in Saco, has long advocated more dialogue between the town and business groups, particularly prior to the adoption of land use regulations that could potentially impact development. A meeting will be held tomorrow to talk specifically about the Natural Resources Ordinance Review.

FCC Logo – Willie Audet

The Conservation Commission discussed potential logo designs about a year ago with Julie Motherwell, a graphic designer who has been active in the conservation of water quality at Highland Lake, but no action was taken since that time. Willie has since met with Julie and says that she will give Willie a call about proceeding with the process.

Membership

Members discussed the skills and experience that the new member to replace Wing Goodale should have. The conclusion was that it would be best if the new member had a background in either energy conservation or wildlife. Caleb, Mel and Lissa agreed to begin the search for a new member by contacting a number of people who might know potential candidates with these qualifications.

Next Steps

- Caleb Hemphill, Mel Dickenson and Lissa Robinson will begin the search for a new member to replace Wing Goodale.
- Caleb Hemphill will lead the April meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:39 PM

Submitted by Gary Fogg