

Falmouth Conservation Commission Minutes of June 2, 2008

Meeting convened at 7:08 PM

Members Present: Lissa Robinson, Chair, Caleb Hemphill, Mel Dickenson, Frank Ruch, Sean Mahoney

Members Absent: Willie Audet

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

Staff: Gary Fogg (consultant)

Monthly Meeting Leader: Sean Mahoney

Guests: David Critchfield (President, Emsource, Inc.)

Minutes

The minutes for the meeting of May 13, 2008 were approved as amended.

Presentation on Community Wind Development by David Critchfield

David's company specializes in recycling environmentally damaged sites for beneficial public uses, and one of the more successful strategies explored by his company has been community wind power. Although Emsource has dealt mainly with municipalities and other public and quasi-public partners, the principles of economically viable wind power generation that he has learned through this work applies to any wind power project.

David said that community wind power projects may not solve all of our renewable energy needs, but their importance goes far beyond the power they generate. Public wind power stations gain people's attention and demonstrate the fact that wind power is a proven technology that has a bright future if its use is widespread and diversified to suit local conditions.

The key to understanding the economic viability of wind power is to match the size and type of wind turbines to optimal wind conditions, not just average wind speed or even the average highest wind speed. Productivity can be summarized by a calculation called the gross capacity factor, which is a number that expresses the proportion of time during the year that a wind turbine is operating at its optimal, but not necessarily peak, capacity. Wind turbines of different types and sizes will yield different results for any given site.

Although the cost of maintaining wind stations is relatively low, since the fuel is free, the economic viability of wind generation is determined by comparing the turbine's gross capacity factor with installation and transmission costs. Typical installation costs include the turbine, land, construction, land planning services, legal services, and environmental permits. Transmission costs are based on the distance that transmission lines must be built to a substation, where the current is reduced and distributed to consumers. In general, wind power stations in rural areas require longer transmission lines to substations than power stations in more urban areas. In addition, large turbines require more land and are more expensive to purchase and install than smaller turbines. Each of these factors has to be weighed carefully when evaluating a site's potential.

Even small turbines can be economically feasible if the land is cheap and transmission costs are low. For this reason, Emsource has found that municipalities and other public entities that own a variety of underutilized properties, such as old landfills and super fund sites, may actually have an opportunity to recycle these properties for a publicly useful purpose as wind power stations. The Maine Public Utilities Commission currently has a program designed to encourage such reuses. Called Efficiency Maine, the program provides grants to help Maine-based schools, communities, non-profits and businesses to assess the economic viability of proposed windmill sites. David said that the Town of Falmouth may want to undertake such a study if it, like many other towns, has

underutilized property in its inventory. In response, the Commission members agreed that they would like to discuss the merits of such a project at their next meeting.

Subcommittee Discussions and Reports

Open Space – Mel Dickenson

- The Committee has evaluated a property offered for sale on the south side of the Presumpscot River. The parcel has a small amount of frontage on Pleasant Hill Road and undeveloped shoreline on the river. After careful evaluation, the Committee decided that the conservation values of the property are not high enough to justify its purchase by the town given the high asking price.
- The Committee will be conducting a reconnaissance of proposed Jewel properties by van with Bob Shafro. Jewel properties are small parcels that contribute in some unique way to community character due to their high visibility, scenic value, undeveloped nature or historic importance.
- The LMF has indicated that the chances are good that they will fund the Falmouth Greenbelt project, but not for as much as the town has asked for. The project is still viable if the Town increases its share of the cost.
- The TDR Subcommittee is examining the formulas used to calculate impact fees for increased density and how those funds would be used. Examples of some funding mechanisms used in Colorado are proving to be helpful in this effort.

Invasive Species – Caleb Hemphill

- Caleb asked and received the Commission's approval for developing a web page linked to the Conservation Commission web site dealing with invasive species identification and control practices.

Natural Resource Ordinances Review – Lissa Robinson

- The CDC/CPAC joint committee reviewed public comment from the Town Council workshop. They then voted to support development of ordinance language to implement the recommendations of the Policy Review Report. The ordinance work will probably be handled by a new committee, called the Land Planning Advisory Committee (LPAC).

Energy – Mel Dickenson

- The Town Council decided to appoint all 22 people who applied for a position on the new Energy Committee. Mel will be one of its members. Its first meeting is scheduled for June 12.

Liaison Discussions and Reports

FTAC – Caleb Hemphill

- The trails at Ridgewood Estates have been hardened with stepping stones and wood bridges.
- Gary Fogg is laying out new trails at the Ledges Subdivision on Ledgewood Road. The trails will link the open space on Ledgewood Road with the open space at the old landfill site on Ocean Avenue in Portland. The project is a joint effort between the developer, Portland Trails and FTAC.

- The FCC is working on three trails projects this summer. Jeff Walker is leading the trail clearing work at the River Point property. Tony Hayes is leading the construction of a canoe dock on the Blackstrap Road property with assistance from the Lions Club. Dave Gagnon is leading a project on the East Branch to clear blowdowns and other debris blocking canoe and kayak access, following up on the work begun by Bob Shafto and other volunteers last year.

FLT – Sean Mahoney

- The Portland North Collaborative Land Trust (PNLT), which includes the Oceanside Conservation Trust, the Cumberland Mainland and Islands Trust and FLT, is pursuing accreditation through the new Land Trust Accreditation Commission, a program sponsored by the Land Trust Alliance. Besides accreditation, PNLT's most ambitious project currently is the development of a habitat conservation plan for the Presumpscot River watershed. This work is being conducted in concert with the Presumpscot River Land Trust, which is based in Gorham and operates throughout the towns bordering the Presumpscot River and Sebago Lake.

Next Steps

- The next meeting of the Commission will be held on Monday, June 30. No meeting in July is planned at the present time. Sean Mahoney will be the meeting leader. The agenda will include a discussion about membership concerns and possible renewable energy initiatives.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 PM

Submitted by Gary Fogg