

MINUTES OF FALMOUTH CONSERVATION COMMISSION, March 5, 2012

We reviewed the minutes from the January meeting. Mel Dickenson chaired. Nancy Lightbody moved to approve, Eileen Beasley, seconded, approval was unanimous. There was no February meeting. Sarah Boudreau has joined the committee.

Mel reported on Open Space activities. The Feb. 12 Open House at Hadlock Forest was attended by about 30 people, a good number. Open Space is now conducting an inventory of farmland, both current, historic, and potential, in Falmouth. Open Space is also following the sale of the Lunt School parcel. The Mabel Wilson trail was built with a federal grant. Since the trail is being eliminated, the town is mandated to dedicate a \$1.2 million mitigation fee to go towards open space elsewhere in town. The money will come from the sale of the land. Some of it may go to the acquisition of new properties, and some may go towards easements which would protect properties which the town already owns. Easements would be a sort of in-kind expenditure.

Eileen reported on Stormwater. She goes to meetings of the Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District, along with someone from Public Works. Since it has built-up areas, Falmouth has to meet federal NIPDES (spelling?) standards. Someone from DEP sits with the committee. A subcommittee is establishing priorities for greater Portland. Mel has been looking at maps to examine the runoff from Route One between Fundy Road and Bucknam Road. That runoff goes into Mussel Cove and Mill Creek. He is checking to see what we can learn from GIS. Susan Gilpin will call Friends of Casco Bay to see if they have collected scientific data in the area. The job of the Conservation Commission is to publicize the need to control stormwater runoff, and build public awareness.

The commission has already mapped invasives in Falmouth, in cooperation with Open Space. It has also set up three test plots next to the Fire Barn on Bucknam Rd. Eliminating invasives asap is important, as they spread fast. We reviewed the first draft of a newspaper insert/brochure on invasive species, drafted by Nancy, Jerry Goodall, and Susan. We talked about the pros and cons of including more species, esp. Japanese knotweed, and considered simplifying the technical language inside the brochure. We agreed to send any additional comments to both Jerry and Nancy. We are waiting on a grant to start a public program controlling invasives. Bob Shafto is working on getting the grant. One idea for the program is to train "stewards" from garden clubs, neighborhoods, and schools, to identify and control invasives.

Susan proposed putting up about a dozen markers along the Portland Trail going through the Tidewater Conservation Area. The signs would describe the interactions between plants and animals. She has approval from the Conservation Foundation. She is working on getting approval from the homeowners association and Portland Trails. She is applying for a grant from Master Gardeners. The Conservation Commission voted unanimously to support the nature trail. Nancy moved and Eileen seconded. Susan will check out the signs of the E. Branch of the Piscataqua River and also check with Bob.

Colin Jones could not attend, so there was no report from the Planning Board. The next meeting will be Monday March 26, at 7 p.m. Minutes by Susan Gilpin.