Town of Farmington

Conservation Commission Meeting

Wednesday, January 21, 2015

**Commission Members Present**: **Commission Members Absent**:
Dave Connolly, Chairman Jacquelin Bissell, excused
Randy Orvis, Vice Chairman Olyvia Brault, Student Rep., excused
Laura Bogardus Morgan Hagar, Student Rep., excused
Richard Ballou **Others Present:**
Rose Muise Barry Keith, BH Keith Associates
Resta Detwiler Richard Gerard, BH Keith Associates
 Rod Thompson, resident
 Eric Chamberlain, FHS teacher
 Libby Brooks, guest
**1 . Call to Order:**
Chairman Connolly called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.
**2. Pledge of Allegiance:**All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.
**3. Public Comment: -** None
**4. Review of Minutes**- December 10, 2014
Page 1-number 5; change” forrest” to “forest”.
Page 2-number 6 F, change “green” to “tan”, Page 2-number 7 A, change “Evelyn” to “Emily”,
Page 2- number 7A, change “forrest” to forest.
**Motion:** (Orvis, second Bogardus) to accept the minutes as amended passed 5-0-1 (Ballou abstained).
**5. Town Forest/BH Keith:**Barry Keith and Richard Gerard of BH Keith Associates came before the commission to present the final report on the Town Forest Management Plan. Two final copies of the management plan were presented to Chairman Connolly, completing the scope of the work for Phase II. Chairman Connolly invited audience members to come forward to view the plan. Highlights of the report include: A Norway Plains boundary survey conducted in May 2014 showed the property is a total of 136.5 acres consisting of five tax lots donated to or purchased by the Town of Farmington. Barry Keith said that 98 acres of the property are forested with the remaining acreage composed of wetlands, trails and the Cocheco River. They used the survey plan and an aerial photo as the basis for the field work and had no issues at the site he said.A review of the deed restrictions indicates the property will be used for conservation, low-impact recreational and educational uses and will remain undeveloped to protect habitats and wetlands.
A portion of the most recent parcel acquired by the town, known as the Lawrence Property (Tax Map R62, Lot 2), was logged before the town took ownership. The remainder of the property is comprised of a mix of soft and hard woods which has not been logged for many years Keith said.
The only access to the interior of the property is located in the southwest corner off Bay Road. There is a small parking lot with a kiosk and gated access to the woods road.
Keith said they located a historic cellar hole on the eastern side of the woods road along with some stone walls and a fire pit. He noted that the N.H. Natural Heritage Bureau found two threatened or endangered species, the American Eel and the Bridle Shiner that were located within the Cocheco River. He added that the N.H. Fish and Game considers much of the property as the Highest Ranked Habitat in the state.
He then turned to the management recommendations which include:
*Natural Areas*-Portions of the tree stands should be left undisturbed to protect the Cocheco River. There should be a 50 foot buffer zone adjacent to the river and a 25 foot buffer zone around the forested wetlands.
*Habitat Management*-Conduct light thinning of some of the mature timber stands to allow sunlight to promote ground growth in deer habitats. Promote hardwood and softwood regeneration that provides wildlife ground cover by performing selected thinning in mixed wood stands. Mast tree release to allow oak and beech trees to produce acorns and beechnuts. Install eight to 10 wood duck nesting boxes in the wetlands along the river to provide shelter. This could become a multi-seasonal educational project for students as the boxes should be maintained year round Keith said.
*Timber Management-* No harvesting for stands 1 and 2 which were cut three or four years ago to give them time to recover Keith said. Perform selective thinning of some mature trees and defective stems to improve the quality of the stand and encourage regeneration. Remove over mature and decayed trees and salvage diseased stems.
*Access and Nature Trail Development-* The plan calls for enlarging the existing parking lot allow vehicles the ability to turn around. It also recommends improving a section of the woods road to create a log landing area for timber harvesting which could then become an open grass area for allowed activities and educational uses.
Improving the woods road for use as a nature trail with proper wetlands crossings is recommended. Discussion included possibly moving the road back away from private property and running the skid around the property instead of along the road which could later be turned into a trail.
Keith said there is currently no access on the east side of the river and that a new entrance off Bay Road in the southeast corner of the property would provide access to a log landing area to harvest timber northeast of the river. This access could also be later be used to access a new nature trail to be constructed on this side of the property. A wetlands permit may be required to make these improvements he said.
The management plan also proposes that the trails on both sides of the river become an interpretive trail system with key viewing points along the way. Signs with numbers that correspond with a brochure and trail map can be posted at selected spots and the brochures and maps could be made available at kiosks located at both trail heads.
Keith then suggested the commission consider adding a leg-shaped parcel of land (Map R 61, Lot 10) that abuts the town land to conservation lands. The piece has additional natural resources value he said.
Richard Gerard said there should be no buildings or structures allowed on the property except those designed for educational purposes. He noted that some of the tree stands are sterile and the site needs selective thinning to allow more sunlight in to promote regeneration. There are signs of red rot decay that must be dealt with so that the affected trees can be salvaged before they die off he said.
Keith said the site shows signs of being an active habitat. Chairman Connolly said the site has been used for hunting in past years, but noted that there has not been much activity of that sort in the last two years. He added that there is more of a problem with illegal fires and parties on the property.
Keith suggested the commission develop some rules for allowed uses and post them on a kiosk at the site. He said that once the rules are posted they become enforceable and added the public won’t know what is and isn’t allowed if the rules are not posted.
Chairman Connolly then asked the commission what action they wished to take.
**Motion:** (Connolly, second Orvis) to accept the Town Forest Stewardship Plan into the town record passed 6-0.
Chairman Connolly said the next step is to determine how to act on the plan. He asked the members for their opinions on whether to begin working on the plan’s recommendations now or to wait a year.
Vice Chairman Orvis suggested the town should wait to do the suggested selective cutting until next winter as the land may be too wet to do the required work before then.
Keith suggested the commissioners take the time to read the plan and then discuss how to proceed. He added that a new RFP would be needed to accomplish the plan’s recommendations if the commissioners determined that help is needed with the implementation he said.
Chairman Connolly then told both men the commission appreciated their good work and thanked them for their efforts.
 **6. Old Business:
A. French Trail(Randy, Dave)-** Chairman Connolly reported that he met with the Boy Scouts two weeks ago to determine their interest in building bridges across the brook as a possible Eagle Scout project. One bridge would be a 90 foot long bog bridge on the skid road while the other bridges would be of a limited length by using existing islands and rocks. Vice Chairman Orvis said the wetland permit for work has been received and added that the trail has been staked out with grade stakes placed about every 100 feet. The Scouts decided to walk the trail and observe the area before making a decision Connolly said.Orvis then asked Barry Keith and Richard Gerard if they could recommend a trail with bridges where the Scouts could see an example of the work to be done. Keith suggested the Squam Center in Holderness, N.H. and at the Isinglass River on Rochester Neck Road in Rochester, N.H. as places to view foot bridges.Chairman Connolly said he will report back to the commission when the Boy Scouts reach a decision on the project. **B. Brochures (Laura, Morgan, Olyvia) -** Member Bogardus reported that the tri-fold brochure is out of the scope of print shop at the high school. She received business price quotes as follows:
Infinite Imaging- (For 100 lb. wt. glossy paper)-500 copies-$250, 1000 copies-$304 Vista Printing - 500 copies-$191, 1000 copies-$297 Bogardus said she recommended purchasing the brochures from Infinite Imaging because the glossy, heavier, better quality paper will stand up to the outdoor elements better. **Motion:** (Orvis, second Ballou) to purchase 1000 brochures from Infinite Imaging passed 6-0.
**C. Blue Job/DRED (Rose)-** Member Muise said she contacted DRED Land Agent Robert Spoerl to get obtain further information on the text for signs to be installed on the trails at Blue Job Mountain. She left her contact information and is waiting to hear back from him she said.
Muise also reported that Mr. Fontaine, Industrial Arts teacher at Farmington High School is ready to
begin constructing the signs once the pertinent information is received.
Muise then said she spoke with Valley View Community School third grade teacher Pam Skeffington about having the students come up with the names for the trails to be used on the signs. She said the teacher requested more information about the mountain such as how it got its name and the history of the site to put the project in context for the students. Muise said Skeffington also plans to use the project as a way to teach the children about maps, trails and the Town Forest. She will advise Skeffington to go to the DRED website to find maps and information about the site. Chairman Connolly also provided a compact disc containing maps of the area to Muise to pass along to Skeffington. Muise added that Skeffington said she would like to have a school assembly to have the children display their ideas for trail names when their part of the project is completed and asked Conservation Commission members to attend.
**D. Invasive Species Forum (Laura) -** Member Bogardus reported that plans are shaping up for the forum on Invasive Insects to be hosted by the commission on Monday, March 16 from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. at the Town Hall. U.N.H. Extension Field Specialist Wendy Scribner will speak at the continuing education series which is open to the public. Bogardus said the next steps will be to determine the contents of the promotional flyer and make arrangements for help setting up the chairs and refreshments.
**E. Shirts/Bracelets (Rose) -** Member Muise said she researched prices for T-Shirts with the Conservation Commission logo on the front of the shirt. Blue Dolphin of Rochester, N.H. provided a quote of $16.60 per shirt for 32 shirts ($531.20) plus a one-time digitizing fee of $50-$75. Chairman Connolly recalled that the commission paid approximately $300- $400 for 48 shirts and said $16.60 is an extravagant amount for a T-Shirt. He suggested that Muise check with Collins Sports Center in Rochester for an additional price quote. He added that “4 Imprint” has the original digitized copy of the commission logo. Member Bogardus suggested Muise also get a quote from Harvey’s Embroidery and Team Sales in Portsmouth, NH.
*Bracelets*- Muise also presented copies of a price quote for silicone/rubber bracelets from Wrist-Band Custom Silicone Bracelets. She suggested choosing a blue band with black lettering to make it stand out more. The $98.99 price includes 100 paid and 100 free bracelets with shipping she said. Chairman Connolly advised that there are still some wristbands left from the last purchase and suggested the commission hold off purchasing any more for another one to two months but to keep an eye on the prices during that time.
**Motion:** (Connolly, second Orvis) to take a 10 minute break passed 6-0 at 7:45 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 7:55 p.m.
**7. New Business:**
**A. Town Report/Group Picture-(Dave)** Chairman Connolly presented the draft of the report of the commission’s activities and accomplishments for the year to be included in the Annual Town Report for member review. Vice Chairman Orvis noted that the land swap between the town and Cameron’s Home and Garden Center cannot be included in the report as the parcel has not been turned over to the commission. He added that he is not sure of the lot’s present status.
Members then suggested a few corrections to punctuation and spacing errors for the final copy of the report to be submitted for publication.
**Motion:** (Bogardus, second Detwiler) to accept the Conservation Commission yearly report as amended passed 6-0.
The members then posed for a group photo that will also be published in the Town Report.
**B. 2014 Conservationist of the Year (Dave)** - Chairman Connolly reported that the commission is still accepting nominations for Conservationist of the Year for 2014. The request for nominations will be carried in Stephanie Piro’s column in the Rochester Times and on the Farmington News Page on Facebook. Anyone wishing to nominate a Farmington resident or business may do so by e-mailing him he said.
**C. 2015 Annual Spring Clean-up (Dave) -** Chairman Connolly said the clean-up is usually scheduled to coincide with Earth Day or during Earth Week in April each year. He said the event takes about three months to put together and noted that some of the tasks involved in the setup include choosing someone to head up the project, determining a meeting place in the morning of the clean-up, a place to meet in the afternoon and locating businesses willing to donate materials and refreshments. Member Detwiler volunteered to coordinate the event.
**D. 2015 Arbor Day(Dave)-** Chairman Connolly said that Arbor Day is celebrated on the last Friday in April and recalled the commission’s tree donations to Fernald Park, Valley View Community School and the front of the Municipal Building. He said the commission will consider a tree donation to any worthy institution and will decide the recipient by March.
**E. Town Forest Walk with NHACC (Dave) -** Chairman Connolly said he was contacted by Public Relations Assistant Emily Lord to discuss how to spread the word about the commission’s successful projects and activities through the NH Association of Conservation Commissions publications. She also asked to participate in a walk at the Town Forest with commission members. Consensus of the commission showed members wished to walk the site on February 5, 2015. Connolly will find out what time the group is to meet he said.
**F. Any Other Business-**
*Barry Conservation 4-H Camp-* Chairman Connolly said he received an e-mail a week ago notifying him that registration for the camp located in Berlin, NH is now open. He said he has also been in contact with administrators at the Henry Wilson School to let them know that the camp is accepting registrations and discuss how the student will be chosen to attend the camp this summer paid for by the commission. School counselors developed a flyer to advertise the opportunity to students which asks them to submit a video or essay describing why they should be chosen to attend the 4-H camp.
The school will choose four or five contestants who will make their pitch to commissioners at their March 18 meeting. He added that the student gets to pick which week he/she would like to attend but warned that the registrations are filled by April for the summer session necessitating the early selection process.
**8. FYI:**
*A. Contact List-* Member Bogardus said her name was misspelled on the member contact list. There is no “r” after the “B” she said.
*B. Final Invoice-* Chairman Connolly said he had received the final invoice for the Town Forest Management Plan prepared by BH Keith and Associates. The commission previously voted to pay the requested amount so no action is necessary he said.
*C. Intent to Cut-* Vice Chairman Orvis reported he received notice of Intent to Cut for Tax Map R34, Lot 11. Approximately three acres of the 11.8 acre lot are scheduled to be cut he said.
**9. Next Meeting Date:**
The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 11, 2015 at 6:30 p.m. in the Municipal Building.
 **10. Any Other Business:** None
 **11. Adjournment:**
 **Motion:** (Orvis, second Bogardus) to adjourn the meeting passed 6-0 at 8:20 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Kathleen Magoon

Recording Secretary