Town of Farmington
Conservation Commission Meeting
Wednesday, June 10, 2015

**Commission Members Present:**Dave Connolly, Chairman
Rose Muise
Resta Detwiler
Richard Ballou
Laura Bogardus
Jerry McCarthy, Selectmen’s Rep.
Jackie Bissell
**Commission Members Absent:**
Randy Orvis, Vice Chairman, excused

**Others Present:**
Barry Keith, Richard Gerard, BH Keith Associates
Residents Rod Thompson, John Wingate, Jane Wingate, Cyndi Paulin, Daniel D.
George Detwiler, visitor
FHS Students R.J. Wood, Joey McIntyre
FHS teachers Eric Chamberlain, Stephen Pascucci

**1). Call to Order:**
Chairman Connolly called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**2). Pledge:**
All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3). Public Comment:**
FHS teacher Eric Chamberlain introduced student reps R.J. Wood and Joey McIntyre to the commission. He also introduced FHS teacher Steve Pascucci as the new Environmental Sciences teacher who will be taking over Mr. Chamberlain’s classes went he retires at the end of the year.
Mr. Chamberlain also reported students conducted water quality testing in the Cocheco and Mad Rivers. He presented the water quality report to the commission and said he was concerned about the possibility of the presence of e-coli in an area on River Road near the French property parking lot. He explained that the students did a biological test where a color change indicates the possibility that the bacteria could be present but does not confirm it. Chairman Connolly said he would contact authorities to determine if further action is necessary.

**Review of Minutes:***May 13, 2015*- Amend the list of members absent to include that Richard Ballou was excused.
**Motion:** (Detwiler, second Bissell) to accept the minutes as amended passed 4-0-3 (Bogardus, Ballou, Muise-abstained).

**5). Old Business:**
*A). Hay Day*- (Dave) Chairman Connolly reminded the members they agreed to spend $75 for three booth spaces for displays at the annual Hay Day to be held on Saturday, August 22, 2015. Members previously discussed inviting other groups and organizations to set up a display regarding conservation or outdoor issues. He reported that the Moose Mountains Regional Greenways and the NH Association of Conservation Commissions are unable to attend, but the student sponsored by the commission to attend summer camp will be available. He asked members for suggestions on groups or individuals to invite to the event. After some discussion, members suggested the NH Fish and Game Dept., Moose Mountain Regional Greenways provide informational materials, York Wildlife Center and the Moose Mountain Reservation be invited. Chairman Connolly suggested the commission review the matter again at the next meeting and determine if they will need to rent three spaces at the event.
*B). Blue Job*- (Rose) Member Muise told the commission that despite several attempts to contact FHS Industrial Arts teacher Dave Fontaine regarding the signs for the trails, there has been no response. Members determined it is too late in the school year for the school to construct the signs and will make plans to place the signs in the fall.
*C). French property-* (Randy/Dave) Chairman Connolly reported no contact with Boy Scout Troop leader Glenn Hayes. Scout member R. J. Wood said the troop is still interested in helping with installation of crossings on the property and said he would ask the leader to contact Chairman Connolly.
*D). Any Other Old Business*- None.
Chairman Connolly then suggested the commission address as much of the agenda as possible before the start of the public hearing (Item #6) and asked members to move to item #7 on the agenda.

**7). New Business:***A). Dubois/French Yearly Monitoring Reports*- (Dave) Chairman Connolly reported that he met with NH Fish and Game Rep. Steve Walker and NH Association of Conservation Commissions Program Manager Emily Lord to hike the French property on May 19. He said the group walked the flagged trail, viewed the new kiosk, road frontage and the boundaries which were found to be in excellent condition.
Connolly said inspection of the Dubois property/Mad River showed signs of minor ATV or snowmobile activity, but no damage to the area. He said the property boundaries were found to be clean and in excellent condition. The trails also showed minor ATV traffic he said. Copies of the reports are available to interested members Connolly said.
**Motion:** (Connolly, second Bogardus) to take a five minute recess passed unanimously at 6:55 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 7:01 p.m.

**6). Public Hearing- Discussion with BH Keith regarding the Town Forest Management Plan:**Chairman Connolly opened the public hearing on the Town Forest Management Plan at 7:01 p.m. Foresters Barry Keith and Rich Gerard came before the commission to discuss the stewardship plan developed by the company and recently approved by the Conservation Commission. Keith said the following activities will take place:
A). A Timber harvest and sale is planned to begin to manage the forest and improve wildlife habitat on the north side of the Cocheco River.
B). A permanent access road will be established near the southeast corner of the property off of Bay Road. The road will access a log landing area and will also serve as access for later recreational activities.
C).The area to be accessed includes about 28 acres of forest with approximately 25 of those acres which will be managed. Management would include single tree and group selective thinning to improve animal habitats and encourage new growth.
D). No cut buffer zones will be established adjacent to the river and wetlands. NH DES wetland permits will be required to cross wetland areas.
E).The harvest will utilize a small scale cable log skidder to minimize impact on the forest.
Resident Cyndi Paulin asked if the plan considers the impact of the harvest on the river itself. She said leaving a substantial buffer provides a means to control water run-off, erosion and helps to keep the water cooler for inhabitants of the river. Chairman Connolly said the plan includes a minimum of a 50 foot buffer. Keith added that cutting some trees also takes up less water.
Member Jackie Bissell asked when the project is scheduled to start. Keith said it depends on the vote of the commission, but said he hoped to start the prep work within the next few weeks. Bissell said she was concerned about the noise affecting the wildlife in the area and asked if the trees will be machine cut. Gerard said the trees will be cut with chain saws.
Resident Jane Wingate told the commission she has lived on Meaderboro Road for 19 years and has never seen a logging operation that looked good. She disputed common arguments for logging such as fire prevention and opening up space for animals. She asked how the forests managed before man came along. Wingate provided photos of previously logged land and photos of properties left in their natural state and asked which parcels looked better. She added there is precious little wild land in Farmington and made a plea for the forest land to be left alone.
Chairman Connolly thanked Mrs. Wingate for her time and efforts and then lauded the Mr. and Mrs. Wingate and Rod Thompson for the way they have managed their properties. He stated the commission is not into clear cutting the land and assured her that no development will ever take place on conservation land.
Mrs. Wingate stated there is plenty of food available for wildlife in the area and noted that damage to habitats is mostly due to the hard winter weather experienced in this area. She added there should be some lands left alone because the “forests know what to do”.
Chairman Connolly directed her to look at one the pictures of an area not managed and noted some of the tree limbs are about six feet off the ground which is difficult for some animals to reach. He said the plan is to allow new growth to regenerate and promote a healthier forest. He cited the grooming of the French property which resulted in new growth the first winter as an example of a successful management plan.
Member Richard Ballou said he is “on the fence” about forest management. He said trees fall down all the time in the natural forest and the moose population goes in and comes out without any help from man. He added that he understands the plan is augment the open spaces in the forest, but he would like to see it left alone.
Ms. Paulin said this is the most active Conservation Commission the town has had in the last 20 years. She asked if the commission intends to force management plans on all the properties under their care or will some lands be left alone. Chairman Connolly said that some areas will be left alone as part of their management plan. He explained that French and Dubois properties are under NH Fish and Game easements and are subject to their management plans. The Town Forest consists of five properties where four of the properties have deed restrictions allowing the land to be managed. The fifth property was clear cut before the Conservation Commission purchased it. He said the intent with the Town Forest is to put all of it in a conservation easement to permanently protect it. Selective timber harvesting is done with the goal to enhance what we have Connolly said.
Ms. Paulin then asked where the parcels that will be left alone are located. Connolly said there are more than 1,000 acres in conservation in town and the commission only controls the properties mentioned. More than half of the lands will remain untouched he said.
Mrs. Wingate asked for an explanation of how the money works in a timber sale. Mr. Keith said the loggers get paid at the mill, 15% of the profit goes to BH Keith and the remaining funds go into the conservation fund. He could not give an estimate of how much could made from the sale as the prep work has not been completed Keith said. Chairman Connolly added that the last timber sale allowed the town to collect $20,000 which was used to purchase the Thompson property easement. When the town makes money the taxpayers are not spending for projects like this Connolly said.
Ms. Paulin also noted that while walking in the forest, she found Japanese Barberry and asked if there any plans to address invasive species. Chairman Connolly asked Mr. Keith to look into the matter and come up with a plan to rid the area of the bush.
Chairman Connolly then closed the public hearing at 7:55 p.m.
**Motion:** (Detwiler, second Muise) to accept and implement the Town Forest Management Plan as presented.
Discussion- Member Ballou asked what the practice is in other towns where BH Keith provides forestry services. Mr. Keith said it depends on whether the parcel has any restrictions or easements. He said they remain neutral in the process and try to do what is asked of them.
Mr. Ballou asked if timber harvesting is mandatory on the Dubois property. Chairman Connolly said the property is under a state management plan.
Mr. Ballou then asked what percentage of towns cut timber on their conservation lands. Mr. Keith said about 75 % harvest timber and 25 % do not harvest timber.
Hearing no further questions, the Chairman called for the vote. The motion passed 5-2-0 (Ballou, Bissell opposed).

**7).New Business:**
*B). Any Other New Business*- A resident came forward and said he has been in town for three years and is looking for bike trails. He also asked how he could help the commission. Chairman Connolly said the commission is presently accepting alternate members who may be asked to sit on the board in the event a full time member is absent. Connolly also listed some of the events the commission is involved with and said they always need more volunteers. He suggested he look at the commission’s Face Book page for more information on upcoming events.

**8). FYI:***Intent to Cut*-
A).Meaderboro Road-Tax Map R 24, Lot 11, total of 40 acres to be cut.
B). Route 153- Tax Map R19, Lot 15, total of 10 acres to be cut.

**9). Any Other Business:** None.

**10). Next Meeting:** Wednesday, July 8, 2015 at 6:30 p.m.

**11). Adjournment:**

**Motion:** (Ballou, second Bogardus) to adjourn the meeting passed unanimously at 8:15 p.m.

Respectively submitted
Kathleen Magoon
Recording Secretary