

Town of Farmington  
Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, July 12, 2017

**Commission Members Present:**

Dave Connolly, Chairman  
Randy Orvis, Vice Chairman  
Laura Bogardus, Secretary  
Bill Fisher  
Patience Taylor  
Charlie King, Selectmen's Rep.

**Commission Members Absent:**

Richard Ballou

**Others Present:**

Tom Sorensen

**1). Site Walk:**

Chairman Connolly opened the meeting at 5:30 p.m. at the Town owned parcel on Pound Road (Tax Map R36, Lot 05) for a review of the property.

**2). Call to Order:**

The meeting reconvened at the Municipal Office Building at 6:40 p.m.

**3). Pledge of Allegiance:**

All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**4). Public Comment:** None.

**5).SCCD/Alena Warren:** Ms. Warren did not attend the meeting.

**6). MMRG/Patti Connaughton-Burns:** Ms. Connaughton-Burns did not attend the meeting.

**7). MaryAnn DiTaranto/FHS Biology:** Ms. DiTaranto did not attend the meeting.

**8). Old Business:**

**A). McCarthy Park (R36, Lot 05) -** Mr. Connolly asked the members for their thoughts on the site walk at the Pound Road property.

Mr. King said the parcel has some elevation but would be suitable for a perimeter trail and a picnic area next to the well head protection area. There is an existing gate at the bottom of lot but there is a reasonable amount of parking space in front of the gate he said.

Mr. Orvis asked if the Town, as a land owner, will have to spend money to maintain Pound Road which is Class VI road now that it will be encouraging public use by creating a park/picnic area there.

Mr. King said that could happen as the residents of Pound Road are currently paying to maintain the road. He said the road is normally in pretty good shape but the heavy rains this year have caused more erosion of the road surfaces. He added that the road was designated as a Class VI road by a vote of the Town and that the Board of Selectmen will need to figure out what is reasonable and what it could or should do about maintaining the road.

Mr. Orvis said that by law the Town can't spend Highway Dept. funds on a Class VI road and suggested the Conservation Commission may have to budget some funds for the maintenance of the road.

Mr. King said if there is a functioning homeowners' group for Pound Road residents and they supplied a copy of their budget detailing their road maintenance expenses to Selectmen the board may be able to determine the Town's share of the expenses as a land owner there.

Mr. Fisher said it is a beautiful area with space for various types of trails with various levels of hiking difficulty. He said there is a nice open area for a picnic spot and that he liked the idea of creating a park and trails there.

Ms. Bogardus and Ms. Taylor said they also liked the idea of creating a park there.

Ms. Taylor said she also wondered about the points brought up by Mr. Orvis.

Mr. Connolly expressed concern about the present condition of the road and said he wouldn't expect people to drive up there in regular passenger cars. He said before they continue discussing putting in any trails there the road issue should be resolved. He added it would be a good idea to contact the Pound Road land owners and discuss paying a fair share as a land owner and to determine what the fair share would be.

Mr. King said the Con Com budget and the ability to pay for any of the park's needs should also be taken into consideration. He suggested it would be a yearly cost and funds should be dedicated for that purpose.

Mr. Orvis suggested the land owners may be willing to take road materials such as a few loads of gravel from the Town pit in lieu of money to maintain the road.

Mr. Connolly suggested they begin by identifying all of the Pound Road land owners and allow him to speak with them or invite them to a Con Com meeting to discuss the matter. He said that once he has more information he would bring the matter to Selectmen for discussion.

Mr. King said Selectmen would need more information to make a decision and suggested Mr. Connolly bring several options for dealing with the matter to the board for consideration. He added that during his tenure on the Planning Board applicants seeking a building permit on the Class VI road have been required to bring the road up to Class V specifications to move forward with their plans.

Mr. Orvis noted that the road does not have Class V width.

Mr. King said he meant there is a minimum standard based on the Town's road and driveway standards.

He added that some land owners don't have an official association but instead "pass the hat" to collect money for road maintenance and do what they can with what they collect.

Mr. Orvis asked how the Commission and the Town acquired the property.

Mr. Connolly said he went to the Selectmen on behalf of the Commission and asked them to consider approving a conservation easement for the property.

Mr. King said he did not know how the Town originally acquired the property but a Town well was installed on the property back in the 1960's or 1970's so the Town must have owned the property at least since then. He said because it is part of the public water system the Town has to

own and maintain the property.

Mr. Connolly said if plans for the park move forward he would also like to see a more recent survey with clear property lines depicted on the survey.

Mr. Orvis volunteered to do some research on the boundaries, the deed to the Town and any existing surveys for the abutting properties.

**B). McCarthy Trail (R32, lot 22)-** Mr. Connolly said that he, Selectman Horgan and a volunteer from Home Depot walked the property behind the Public Safety Building last week and put up signs along the looped trail that is being developed there. He said minimal clearing was needed for the trail which mostly involved moving materials off to the side and removing a few branches overhanging the path.

He said they also discussed creating a themed trail with Police Chief Jay Drury and they received some help with the project from employees of the Rochester Home Depot. The employees suggested “The Three Little Pigs” as the trail theme with 3 stations representing the straw house, the stick house and the brick house from the story. Themed displays where hikers can place their heads in the holes to have their pictures taken are planned for each location he said.

Mr. Connolly said that after the Big Bad Wolf huffed and puffed and blew down the houses he went off to Red Riding Hood’s house so there will be a fourth station for her where kids can be involved in an interactive activity . He said Home Depot will supply materials and volunteers for the project.

Mr. Connolly said he also talked to the Commission’s local sign maker (member Bill Fisher) about constructing signs for the trail head, trail markers, attractions and exits.

Mr. Fisher agreed to construct the signs as needed. He said he will try to use recycled materials when possible but that he may need up to \$75 for the sign posts and related materials.

Mr. Orvis asked if Home Depot would be willing to donate some of sign posts.

Mr. Connolly said he will ask if the store will donate the posts.

He added that they are still considering what to do with the tower located on the property.

Ms. Bogardus asked about the large hole in the floor inside the tower.

Mr. Orvis said the tower is the previous location of Town Well #1.

**C). Family Day-** Ms. Bogardus said she checked out the Fernald Park area in preparation for the nature scavenger hunt to be held as part of the Family Day event on Saturday, July 22. She gave the members copies of two handouts, one with a written description of the items on the scavenger list and a second handout with drawings of the items to be found. She said she would provide small buckets or paper bags for the children to collect the items in. She said that she had not had an opportunity to contact the Police Dept. to see if they have any remaining trinkets that could be used for prizes for the participants. She then asked the members for suggestions for items that should be removed or added to the scavenger hunt list.

Mr. King said asked how the young children would not interpret the list to mean that they are supposed to bring back the insects and the trash they find.

Ms. Bogardus said she planned to talk to the children before they began their hunt to point out the items they should leave where they are found and that she hoped they would have a parent or

older sibling with them for the hunt.

Mr. Connolly suggested that both lists be given to participants so the child can look at the drawings and the parent or older sibling can read the written list to determine which items are to be brought back and which items are to be described but left where they are found.

Mr. King suggested a simple drawing of the park be placed in the middle of the handout and put the drawings of the items around the perimeter of the paper and have the child draw a line from the item to where it is located in the park.

Ms. Bogardus thanked him for the idea and said she planned to incorporate it into the handout.

Mr. Connolly thanked her for her efforts and said that unfortunately he would not be able to attend the event due his work schedule for that day.

**D).Hay Day-** Mr. Connolly said that so far the only people to respond to the invitation to attend Hay Day at the Con Com booth spaces are Moose Mountain Regional Greenways and the Strafford County Conservation District. There has been no response from the Southeast Land Trust or the York Wildlife Center. He said the Seacoast Eat Local van will be there and will take up one the spaces that the Con Com will be renting at the Aug. 19 event. Members then discussed set up time, availability of pop-up tents, tables and chairs, booth coverage and tear down for the event.

**E). Any Other Old Business-**

**1).Turtle Crossings-** Mr. Connolly said he contacted NH Fish and Game about the turtle crossings in Town as discussed at the previous meeting. He said a representative told him it is a very common problem all across the state and advised him to Google “turtle crossing signs” and to put up signs to warn motorists.

Mr. King asked if the dept. offered any advice about how to prepare natural crossings for the turtles. He added there may be some crossing types not favored by turtles and that are not conducive to fixing the problem.

Mr. Orvis said there is an existing culvert crossing between the Public Safety Building and the Farmington Children’s Center but that it is often filled with water making it unusable as a crossing much of the time. He said that even when it is not filled with water he didn’t think the turtles would use it because it is not an open-bottom culvert.

Ms. Bogardus asked if there is no solution to the problem or if it was just that Fish and Game doesn’t have a solution.

Mr. Orvis said he suspected that Fish and Game was just being realistic about the problem. He said turtles will cross the road from wherever they happen to be and don’t use the specially made crossings unless they happen to be where the crossing is located. He said if someone says a certain type of crossing is more successful that it is probably coincidental.

Mr. Connolly said he will research some signs for the crossing areas.

**2). Blue Job Trail Signs** - Ms. Taylor asked Mr. Connolly if he was able to follow up with Meaderboro Road resident Marilyn Robeaud regarding stranded hikers in her neighborhood. Mr. Connolly said that he did and explained that a lot of the hikers start their trip in Strafford and end up on Meaderboro Road in Farmington. The residents then give the lost hikers rides back to

their cars in Strafford after they have hiked approx. 7 miles to Farmington.

Mr. Connolly said this issue has come in the past and that after contacting several state depts.

plans to get local schools involved in constructing the trail markers apparently fell through.

He said the trails are marked from the trail head in Strafford but once you get to the fire tower there are several trails leading in the direction toward Farmington which are not marked. There is nothing directing them back to the trail head so people become confused and are getting lost he said.

Mr. Connolly said he contacted the NH Dept. of Resources and Economic Development (DRED) and was told they will re-generate the sign project. He said the responsibility for the trail markers is on DRED as it is a state forest and the Commission has no authority over the land except to notify the proper authorities of any issues or problems taking place there.

Mr. Orvis suggested the installation of a kiosk with trail maps at the trail head.

Mr. Connolly said there is a kiosk there but he did not know if they are keeping it stocked with maps.

Mr. King suggested a second kiosk be installed at the fire tower with trail maps.

Mr. Connolly noted that about 50 feet from the fire tower there are 4 trails for hikers to choose from and that no one knows where each trail goes.

Ms. Taylor said the round trip to Strafford and back to Farmington is approx. 44 miles costing those Farmington residents money and time for returning the stranded hikers. She then thanked Mr. Connolly for following up to attempt to get the matter resolved.

#### **9). New Business:**

**A). Dubois Landing-** Mr. Connolly said he received a written report from BH Keith and Associates on the site inspections for the Dubois and French lots.

Mr. Keith reported the Dubois property is in overall good condition. No significant blow down or erosion was found and the forest stand is improving with new growth and vigor. The gate to the wildlife opening was found in a locked but open position but no evidence of vehicle use was found. The wildlife opening is fully vegetated with herbaceous/grass cover he said.

Mr. Keith recommended the gate should be closed and locked; the fertilization of the wildlife opening should be placed on hold at this time; a composite soil sample should be performed to assess the fertilization ratio for further application and to mow the opening in late summer/early fall.

Mr. Connolly said that prior to receipt of the report he received a quote from Steve Yurick to conduct the fertilization of the landing area for \$450. He said he checked back with Mr. Keith who suggested the fertilization not be done at this time. He added that the UNH Cooperative Extension can conduct the soil test for about \$25.

**Motion:** (Bogardus, second Orvis) to conduct a soil analysis at the Dubois property passed 6-0.

**B). French Lot-** Mr. Keith's written report stated the French lot is in general good condition. The boundary is well marked but some of the green conservation land signs are missing or need to be replaced.

Mr. Orvis asked if the signs were stolen or damaged by animals or weather conditions at the site.

Mr. Connolly said Mr. Keith did not report any reasons why the signs were missing or damaged. Mr. Orvis said some animals have been known to chew and/or eat plastic.

Mr. Keith's report said the forest there is continuing to experience new growth with an improvement in the stand quality. The trail head, parking area, trail markers, foot bridge signs and kiosk are in good condition and the trail is in excellent condition. The vernal pool habitats along the trail were found to be active, the wildlife opening is developing a well established Aspen component, there are significant areas of blackberries and raspberries observed at the opening and deer, turkey and song birds were sighted.

Mr. Keith recommended further development of the nature stations in the visitor brochure; to continue to monitor the trail activity and usage and to schedule the bush hogging in the wildlife opening for the late summer/early fall 2018 to establish a two year vegetation management cycle. Mr. Connolly said he received an invoice for the site inspections and reports for \$300 from Mr. Keith which breaks down to 4.5 hours at \$60 an hour plus 60 miles at 50 cents a mile.

Motion: (Orvis, second Bogardus) to pay the invoice passed unanimously.

**B). Any Other New Business:**

**Review of Minutes-** Mr. Connolly apologized for forgetting to include the review of minutes as part of the agenda and asked the members to review them as new business.

June 14, 2017- No errors or omissions

Motion: (Bogardus, second Fisher) to accept the minutes as written passed 6-0.

**10). FYI:** None.

**11). Upcoming Dates:**

A). July 22, 2017- Family Day

B). August 9, 2017- Next Commission meeting

C). August 19, 2017- Hay Day

**12). Any Other Business:**

**Seacoast Area Mobile Market (SAM) Van** - Mr. Fisher reported that the SAM van will be located in the TD Bank parking lot every Friday from 5 to 6 p.m. for the sale of fresh local produce and asked residents to support them.

Mr. King asked if there were any flyers or signs available to help advertise their weekly presence behind the Goodwin Library.

Mr. Fisher said he will ask them if there are flyers available for posting around town. He said they plan to advertise it in the library newsletter and on the Community Forum Facebook page. He added that it is a "good deal" on locally grown produce as those patrons eligible for the SNAP/EBT benefits programs can get a 50% discount on their purchases. He said this is a second attempt for a van location in Farmington and urged people to "use it or we will lose it".

**13). Adjournment:**

Motion: (Bogardus, second Taylor) to adjourn the meeting passed unanimously at 7:55 p.m.

Respectively submitted  
Kathleen Magoon  
Recording Secretary

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Dave Connolly, Chairman