

Town of Farmington
Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, August 9, 2017

Commission Members Present:

Dave Connolly, Chairman
Randy Orvis, Vice Chairman
Bill Fisher
Laura Bogardus

Commission Members Absent:

Charlie King, Selectmen's Rep.-excused
Patience Taylor, excused
Richard Ballou, excused

Others Present:

Patti Burns, Moose Mountains Regional Greenways
Alena Warren, Strafford County Conservation District
Residents Martin Laferte, Joe Pitre

1). Call to Order:

Chairman Connolly called the meeting to order at 6 p.m.

2). Pledge of Allegiance:

All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

3). Public Comment: None

4). MMRG/Patti Burns:

A). MMRG Conservation Plan- Ms. Burns said the group has recently completed the conservation plan and held a roll-out ceremony at the Pinckney Boathouse in Wolfeboro on July 18. The 1 year project began because the organization, which formerly only facilitated conservation easements, began to hold property easements in 2013 and wanted to prioritize the parcels as they came in. They wanted to engage the community in the process and held several community outreach/visioning sessions to determine what is important to residents of the region while balancing economic and conservation needs she said.

She said the next step was to survey of about 320 people and to assemble a group of stakeholders representing land users from all walks of life typical for this region. After 3 training sessions, the 34 participants voted on the most important conservation values which were used to create a color cards map which prioritizes those values. Top priorities included protection of the lake watersheds, drinking water resources, wildlife habitats and "climate change resilience" where animals find ways to adapt to warmer climate and stronger storms by moving north or to higher ground she said.

Ms. Burns then pointed out on the Conservation Focus and Conservation Action Plan maps which areas have the highest resource values from a conservation point of view and the votes of the stakeholders. The areas include the highest priority areas (orange), high priority areas (lime green) and areas already conserved through easements or deed restrictions (dark green). She said the Farmington lands came up as some of the highest priority to conserve because of the

Cocheco River watershed, having more prime soils than the rest of the region, climate change resilience and for connectivity to other conserved parcels in and outside of the region.

She then drew the members' attention to the Greenways Concept Plan map and said that next they looked at how the MMRG would address this issue noting that Greenways are connecting corridors to green spaces that help wildlife move more freely away from threats, to disperse their genetic code resulting in healthier populations and are also great opportunities for trails.

Ms. Burns said they went through the towns' Master Plans, National Resource Inventories, Storm Water Management Plans and other programs developed within the last 7 years to see which features and values were repeated and the top 6 features for each town were added to the conservation list. The stakeholder input was added to the peer review data and a chapter on local values was created and will be sent to the local Conservation Commissions she said.

Ms. Burns said individual maps were also created for each of the 7 towns in the region. The Local Conservation Priorities for the Town of Farmington map shows local values plus information gathered by MMRG based on the town documents. Due to the number of streams, water sheds and prime farm land almost the entire town is recognized as a priority for conservation she said.

Ms. Burns said MMRG is offering to share the maps with the towns. In some towns the Con Com has endorsed the plan and shared it with the Planning Board to use in a Natural Resources section in their Master Plans. She said MMRG will provide an electronic version of the maps now and they expect to offer copies of the large paper maps in Sept.

Mr. Connolly asked if they obtained any information from the Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC).

Ms. Burns said she didn't think the SRPC was included in the data gathering for the plan.

Mr. Connolly said he asked because about 8 years ago the Con Com worked with SRPC to create the overlay maps on the walls of the Selectmen's Chambers. He added that the Planning Board paid half of cost for the maps but he did not know if they have used them.

Ms. Burns said the MMRG plan is a conservation plan not a "big picture" plan like SRPC which doesn't marry together sometimes but that they do respect the work that SRPC does.

Mr. Orvis noted that 2 green areas- a subdivision behind Labrador Road and parallel to Governors Road has a conservation easement and a parcel on Bay Road has 18 acres of restricted land are not shown on the Farmington map as already conserved.

Ms. Burns said she would "pencil them in" on the map before leaving and check to see if they are included on the final version of the Farmington map.

Mr. Connolly asked if there were any public comments/questions for Ms. Burns.

There were no public comments.

Mr. Orvis asked if MMRG has considered well managed OHRV trails for some of the corridors. The trails may help give more access to a landowner's land, are a source of good family recreation and may be the only way to see some of these places he said.

Ms. Burns agreed but said that first the land owners have to agree with it and that MMRG would need a management fund to maintain the trails.

Mr. Orvis said he has been trying to hook up with an existing club or considering starting a Farmington ATV club because that is the only way to be eligible for state money for maintaining trails.

Ms. Burns said she heard that there may be new legislation pending to provide more state funding for trails.

Mr. Orvis asked State Rep. Joe Pitre if there was a law passed last year that OHRV/ATV club members can get a discount on their registration fees and that more money would go to the clubs. Rep. Pitre said he didn't recall the legislation and offered to look up its status for the members. Mr. Connolly said that the legislation was mentioned in the NH Association of Conservation Commissions newsletter stating they are watching this legislation but he didn't know the outcome of the bill.

B). Moonlight Hike- Ms. Burns told the commission that because they voted to make a donation to the Leary Field and Forest project the Con Com could be added as a co-sponsor of the Moonlight Hike to be held on Sept. 6 from 6 to 9 p.m. She said a postcard advertising the event to raise funds for the Conservation Plan will be sent to Farmington residents and the members of the MMRG. She then asked if the Con Com wished to be listed as a co-sponsor of the event.

Motion: (Bogardus, second Fisher) to co-sponsor the event passed 4-0.

Ms. Burns suggested they bring dinner to enjoy during a presentation while the moon rises and then they will hike back to the entrance.

C). CC Mixer- Ms. Burns said the annual Conservation Commissions Mixer is scheduled for 10-26-17 at the Great Hall in Wolfeboro. She said the start time is yet to be determined but there will be a dinner hour with refreshments and the topic for the evening will be the Conservation Plan and how to use it at local level.

D). Festival Fundraiser- Ms. Burns also announced the "Woods, Water and Wildlife Festival" which is MMRG's biggest yearly fundraiser to be held at the Branch Hill Farm in Milton on Saturday, August 12 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission is \$5 and free for members/co-sponsors.

5). SCCD/Alena Warren:

Ms. Warren said that the last time she met with the commission they talked about choosing topics for seminars that she could help set up. She said that Karen Tuininga of the NH Permaculture Guild has agreed to speak about Permaculture at a public forum to be hosted by the Con Com at the Public Safety Building. She said that Ms. Tuininga suggested the forum be held in late Sept. and a tentative date of Sept. 20 was chosen pending the availability of the meeting room at the Public Safety Building.

Mr. Connolly asked if Ms. Tuininga has held any other public forums to get an idea of the expected attendance for the upcoming forum.

Ms. Warren said she did not know about the attendance at her previous public meetings but that in addition to teaching a class on the subject she has spoken before some groups and would adapt the content based on the experience in the room.

Ms. Warren then provided the commission with copies of a draft flyer advertising the proposed

forum with a brief description of subject, date, time, location and hosts for the event.

Mr. Connolly suggested the event be advertised on the local cable TV channel, the Town website, on Face book, and around town with the flyers. He then asked if SCCD can help with the advertising.

Ms. Warren said the SCCD will advertise the event through their e-mail list and in the newspaper. She added that she planned to bring flyers to Hay Day and asked for a copy of the Town seal to include in the ads.

Mr. Connolly said he would e-mail her a copy of the letterhead that includes the Town seal and the Con Com logo. He said he would check on the availability of the Public Safety Building on Sept. 20.

6). Old Business:

A). Hay Day/Final Prep- Mr. Connolly said the Hay Day will be held on August 19 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. with set up beginning at 6 a.m. He said the SCCD, MMRG, and the SAM VAN will join the Con Com at their booth area which will be set up on the street on Central St. between the bank and funeral home. He said the members usually park at the Post Office parking lot and that he plans to start setting up the pop-up canopies and tables at 7 a.m. The roads will be closed off to through traffic at 8 a.m. The bed race is held at 2 p.m. and attendance at the event falls off after that but roads won't re-open until 4 p.m. He suggested that the groups' representatives plan to bring display items that are easy to carry to and from the booth area.

Mr. Connolly said that Taylor Rentals are once again donating the use of their tables for the event and that he would pick them on Friday evening. He asked for a volunteer to return the tables and the Fish and Game Fur Kit after the event.

Mr. Fisher volunteered to return the items.

Mr. Connolly, Ms. Bogardus and Mr. Fisher said they planned to attend the event. Mr. Orvis said he was not sure of his availability due to his work schedule.

Ms. Bogardus recalled that the student sent to 4-H Camp by the Con Com had agreed to attend the event and recount his experiences at camp.

Mr. Connolly said the student should be back for camp by now and that he would follow up with him. The members then discussed what informational/display items and handouts to include in the booths. He advised members to bring their own chairs.

Mr. Pitre said that Farmington has a long history of conservation and recalled conservation displays in the Town Hall and that Ted Williams and Curt Gowdy use to come to town to enjoy the hunting and fishing here.

Mr. Fisher suggested that the history of conservation in Farmington might be a good theme for the Con Com's Hay Day booth next year.

B). McCarthy Trail Update- Mr. Connolly said he met with the Home Depot manager and they agreed to work on the trail as a Team Depot project. He said the materials and time will be donated to set up the themed trail based on the Three Little Pigs and Little Red Riding Hood. Team members will make the plywood cut outs, paint and install the stations on trail. The

company will also donate the green stakes for the trail signs. He said the company will install everything in one day in Sept. and have requested media coverage for the project.

Mr. Fisher said he has completed the signs for the trail and he is waiting for the sign posts and for instruction as to their placement at the site.

He said that the commission previously approved the expenditure of \$200 for signs and he has spent \$248.77 so far. He added that additional lumber is needed for the entrance sign at a cost of \$60.

Motion: (Orvis, second Bogardus) to spend up to an additional \$125 passed 4-0.

Mr. Fisher provided the receipts for the work completed so far

Mr. Connolly said he would keep the members updated as the project moves along. He suggested they plan to hold an opening/dedication ceremony after the work is completed and invite Home Depot and the Police Chief to the ceremony in honor of the late Selectman Gerry McCarthy. He added that he has started preliminary research into the cost for a granite bench for the site.

Mr. Connolly said he also contacted the president of the 500 Boys and Girls Club to discuss the use of the Paulsen Road property to provide a second access to the McCarthy Trail. He said they plan to walk the property in the spring to determine the number and location of wetlands area and if the project can be accomplished without the need for a Trails Notification or other NH Dept. of Environmental Services permits.

C). Canoe Launch- Mr. Connolly said that he and a former Con Com member went to the current launch site at the Transfer Station entrance to view the conditions there. He said that he has since met with the new owner of the adjacent property on Cocheco Road and Main Street to discuss moving the launch to his property. He reported that the owner said he would be happy to provide a launch area and that it is only a matter of logistics.

Mr. Fisher said the owner presented a conceptual plan for the property to the Planning Board and mentioned he would allow a canoe launch to be installed on the property.

D). Any Other Old Business- Family Day- Ms. Bogardus reported that about 6 young children participated in the scavenger hunt as part of the Family Day activities at Fernald Park. She showed the members how one "little scientist" filled out the picture list with some detail about where everything was found. She said the kids appeared to have had a good time and some of them even picked up some trash they found along the way.

Mr. Connolly suggested she include the completed lists as part of the Con Com Hay Day display.

7). New Business:

A). Request for Site Walk/Cocheco River, Main Street to Central Street- Mr. Connolly said that a resident requested the Con Com conduct a site walk along Cocheco River from Main Street to Central Street to determine the feasibility of incorporating a river walk connecting the two streets. He said he thought it was an "awesome idea" but when driving by the Central St. he saw that there is no access from the road to the river. There is also no access on Main St. due to the bridge construction and that the project is expected to take about another 6 months to complete. Mr. Orvis asked if the project could even happen with all the private property issues. He said Army Corps has an easement to river area and asked when the last time the river was dredged.

Mr. Pitre said the last dredging was about 10 yrs ago and noted they have to keep doing it.
Mr. Orvis said it has been dredged 4 or 5 times since he has been here and it seems that the time frame between dredging is getting longer.
Mr. Connolly said the person said he will research the private land owners and easements there.
Mr. Orvis suggested it may be easier to have a river walk on the other side of the river.
Mr. Connolly he didn't think it matters which side as long as it connects Central and Main Sts.
Mr. Orvis said if the walkway was on other side it could also connect to Tappan St.
Ms. Bogardus said they could also connect it to the existing path to go around the park.
Mr. Pitre said he has maps of the canal on Spring St. and if you look up the river on Central St. the blocks and pipes from the old power plant are still visible.
Mr. Orvis said the boundary lines for lots backed up to the canal and now they go to the center of where the canal use to be.

Consensus of the members was to have Mr. Connolly continue the discussion with the resident about the feasibility of the proposal, "staying out of people's backyards", to consider researching the opposite side of the river for the river walk and potential improvements to the area.

B). Any Other New Business- None

8). Review of Minutes:

July 12, 2017- No errors or omissions

Motion: (Bogardus, second Orvis) to accept as written passed 4-0

9). FYI: Mr. Connolly said he has been notified that the Con Com will receive some current land use money following 3 lots being taken out of current use.

10). Upcoming Dates:

Hay Day- 8/19/17

Moonlight Hike – 9/6/17

Sept. Con Com Meeting- 9/13/17

CC Mixer- 10/26/17

11). Any Other Business: None

12). Adjournment:

Motion: (Orvis, second Bogardus) to adjourn the meeting passed unanimously at 7:20 p.m.

Respectively submitted

Kathleen Magoon

Recording Secretary

David Connolly, Chairman