

Town of Farmington
Conservation Commission
Wednesday, October 11, 2017

Commission Members Present:

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

Commission Members Absent:

Richard Ballou

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). Dubois Mowing/Steve Yurick/JS Yurick Land Design Services:

Mr. Yurick was unable to attend the meeting.

Mr. Connolly said Mr. Yurick provided a fixed quote of \$300 for mowing the 1.5 acre log landing at the Dubois property. He said Mr. Yurick inquired if the Commission wished to have the property mowed this fall to discourage weed growth and encourage clover/wildflower growth or wait until next June to mow before the Goldenrod seeds break open.

Ms. Bogardus asked if the field is mowed this fall if it would have to be mowed again next year.

Mr. Connolly said it would not need to be mowed next June if it is mowed now.

Mr. Orvis suggested the members first decide if the field is being managed for bees and butterflies or for the white tail deer and then choose the appropriate mowing date.

Mr. Connolly said he recalled the consensus of the members was to encourage plant growth for the wildlife in the area.

Mr. Orvis said he thought the clover growth should be encouraged for the deer and noted that they also like poison ivy but do not like Goldenrod. He asked what other types of plants are growing in that area.

Mr. Connolly said he noticed some milk weed but there was mostly Goldenrod growing in the field. He noted it has been about 2 years since that field has been cut.

Motion: (Bogardus, second King) to schedule the mowing for this fall passed unanimously.

Motion: (King, second Fisher) to pay Steve Yurick \$300 to mow the Dubois lot passed unanimously.

5). Master Plan Review/Dan DeSantis:

Mr. DeSantis did not attend the meeting.

Mr. Connolly gave the members excerpts from the Land Use, Natural Resources and Recreation Chapters from the 2005 Master Plan that relate to the Conservation Commission. He asked the members to review each section and then discuss any potential revisions needed.

Mr. Orvis asked if the Town is planning to send out a questionnaire to residents regarding the Master Plan update.

Mr. King said he was not aware of any plan to send out a questionnaire at this time and that the Planning Board will handle the Master Plan update possibly with the assistance of a subcommittee.

Mr. Orvis questioned how the plan could be revised without knowing what the residents and property owners want.

Mr. King said that how the questions are structured will affect the responses and how the Town goes about reaching the goals. He suggested the Master Plan format be changed to highlight the objectives by a bulleted list instead of sprinkling them throughout the issues. Some of the goals of the 2005 Plan are still pertinent and some need to be decided on a case by case basis he said.

Mr. Orvis said a way to encourage cluster development is to allow the transfer of development rights so that a developer could sell his development rights to a lot in one part of town to another developer in a different area of town.

Mr. King said this is an interesting concept but could lead to a slippery slope where a savvy developer may try to sell the development rights to piece of land that is not buildable.

Mr. Orvis said this could be prevented by setting up certain import and export zones and exclude those rural zones that the Town wishes to protect from development.

Mr. Connolly said it seems apparent from the discussion that the members have some questions about the information provided in the Plan.

Mr. Sorensen suggested they reach out to other counties, states or countries for ideas on development and preserving land and see what has worked for them.

Mr. King suggested the members determine what goals/objectives they would like to see from a conservation standpoint and submit them for inclusion into a potential new survey. Then someone will redraft the document and the Commission could review the draft he said.

Chapter 3, Natural Resources, Page 13, second paragraph- The members agreed they did not like the first sentence that states that historically Farmington has a poor record of wetland protection.

Mr. Orvis said 30 years ago there was a high profile parcel where the Town did what it could but the state did not enforce the state laws. It is not up to the town to enforce state wetlands regulations and the most it can do is report the violations he said.

Mr. King asked Mr. Orvis for his opinion as a professional in this area, how Farmington compares to other towns in wetlands protection.

Mr. Orvis said Farmington has the average amount of protections when compared to other communities.

Mr. King said he felt the wetlands regulations need to be more clear and straightforward

especially when dealing with state laws.

Mr. Orvis said part of the problem is with the definition of a wetland and that 99% of people don't know what a wetland is.

Ms. Taylor asked what the "exceptional qualities" are that designate a wetland area as a Class One wetland as stated on page 3-13.

Mr. Orvis said that the three tiered wetlands ordinance was developed in 1992 and that Farmington does not have any Class One wetlands. He said some reasons a wetland could be considered exceptional include the existence of a rare or endangered species habitat, flood storage or educational value.

Chapter 3, Natural Resources, Section 11, Conservation Lands, Page 28- Mr. Connolly gave the members a list of town owned and privately owned lands now in conservation and said that the list in the 2005 Master Plan needs to be updated.

Mr. King noted the discrepancy in the number of acres in conservation shown in the 2005 Master Plan and on Mr. Connolly's list and asked if the 2005 list was incorrect or if there has been a 2% increase in the amount of protected lands in town. He added that there about 700 acres in the Master Plan not included on Mr. Connolly's list.

Mr. Orvis suggested some of the difference may be due to a property being listed under a different name on Mr. Connolly's list.

Mr. Connolly said he did not think it was necessary to include the complete breakdown of the private conservation lands in the Master Plan but that it should include the location and description of Town owned protected lands and the total amount of acreage now in conservation. Mr. Orvis said one of the goals not included in the Master Plan is to connect parcels along the Mad River. He cited several properties already owned or under easement along the river and said the Town has done a pretty good job with this goal so far.

Mr. King noted the section on land in Current Use in the 2005 Master Plan is incomplete.

Mr. Connolly said the Master Plan should also be updated because outside agencies use the Master Plan as a tool when discussing future plans or proposals with the Commission. He asked if there is a state law or Town ordinance specifying how often a Master Plan must be updated.

Mr. King said the Master Plan is meant to be guide to the community's goals and it is recommended it be updated every 5 years. The revised Plan should include what has been accomplished and a clear path to the future goals and objectives he said.

Mr. Orvis said he disagreed with the statement requiring the Town to have a licensed forester to inspect all logging jobs to insure compliance with regulations. He said this would be a significant change that would not protect the environment and would result in a lot of angry people.

Mr. King said this would impose more restrictions and costs on residents who already have to abide by state and local ordinances and pay the costs related to implementing them.

Section 11.1 MMRG, Page 29- Mr. Connolly said this section should be more generalized as the Moose Mountains Regional Greenways is not the only group the Town works with.

Section 11.3 Current Use- Mr. King suggested a summary of the lands and a total acreage in Current Use could be included here. These lands are not in conservation but are undevelopable

without payment of a Current Use penalty and are typically open to public use. Only a small percentage is posted to prohibit fishing or hunting he said.

Mr. Connolly noted that the second to last sentence in the last paragraph is incorrect and needs to be amended to state that Farmington collects 100% of the Current Use penalty each year for the conservation fund.

Chapter 7, Recreation, Section 3.4, Trails in Farmington, Page 4- Mr. Connolly suggested this section be rewritten to bring it up to date about the trails in town and to remove the drawing of the potential trail routes near downtown.

Mr. King suggested streamlining the revised Master Plan by combining all of the undevelopable lands such as the conservation, Current Use and trail lands into one summarized section with the detailed lists, information and maps in appendixes at the back of the Plan.

Mr. Orvis suggested that development of OHRV trails be added as a goal to the Plan. He said an individual recently expressed interest in starting an OHRV club in town and added that is how the Town could apply to receive state money for maintenance of those trails.

Mr. King asked about the future possibility of the state allowing OHRV use on the former railroad bed trails.

Mr. Orvis said it will take an act of the U. S. Congress because some of the trails were purchased with federal money that does not allow them to be used by motorized wheeled vehicles. He said the state has approached the NH Congressional delegation to sponsor a bill to allow OHRV use on the trails but has not made much progress so far. He added that it would still be possible to have OHRV trails without the use of the railroad beds if approval for their use is not obtained.

Chapter 7, Recreation, Section 5.0, Land Use Implications and Policy Actions, Page 7- Some members noted some currently popular activities such as mountain biking, fishing, ATV snow mobile and horseback riding, piloting drones and hunting were not included on the list of the most popular activities in NH.

Mr. Connolly said some of the items listed in Section 5.1 (Land Use Implications) and Section 5.2 (Potential Actions) come under the direction of Recreation Dept. (programs and activities) while some items would be tasked to the Conservation Commission (greenways, trails and paths).

Mr. Connolly asked if there were any more comments or observations from the members that he needed to address with the Town Planner.

Mr. Orvis suggested they comment about things that are missing from the Master Plan such as recreation for other age groups besides children and youths.

Mr. Connolly said the Plan does mention recreation for the elderly and handicapped individuals in Section 9 but suggested the recreation sections should be combined and streamlined so there 4 or 5 bulleted sections instead of 9 bulleted sections.

Mr. King suggested the information could be laid out in a manner that begins with a brief history/background of each chapter item, what is currently being done and goals for the future so that someone reading it would think “this is what it was, this is what it is now and this is where the Town wants to go”.

He added that the underlining goal of the Master Plan is to have what is good about Farmington continue and to make improvements to have a better quality of life for its residents.

Ms. Taylor asked if it would be possible to get the Town Planner to help them with the revisions.

Mr. Connolly said he will contact Mr. DeSantis and ask him to attend a future meeting.

Motion: (Bogardus, second Fisher) to take a 5 minute recess passed unanimously at 7: 20 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 7:30 p.m.

6). Old Business:

A). Barry 4H Camp- Mr. Connolly said he received a thank you letter from the UNH Cooperative Extension-Barry 4H Camp for providing a scholarship so a student could attend camp. The letter said the campers make thank you cards each week as a small token of appreciation and that the members may also enjoy the slide show posted on their website. The Administrator asked donors to consider sponsoring a camper again next year.

Mr. Connolly then displayed a Thank You card made by student Kyle Allard who attended camp for one week sponsored by the Conservation Commission.

Mr. Orvis asked when the Commission would have to reserve a place for next year's student camper.

Mr. Connolly said he thought a reservation must be made early in the year and planned to reach out to Henry Wilson School counselors in November to get the process started for next year.

B). Fall Clean-up- Mr. Connolly said that 22 volunteers came out for the Fall Cleanup which was held on Sept. 17. He thanked the volunteers for their help in collecting 320 lbs. of trash from River Road and Bay Road from the Town line to the Abbott's Grant portion of the Town Forest. He also thanked the Commission members for their help in putting the event together, the Police, Fire and Public Works Depts. for their assistance during the clean up.

Mr. Connolly said the event went well and that he was ready to continue holding bi-annual clean-ups each year.

Ms. Bogardus said she thought that holding the clean up on a Sunday afternoon was a better time for many of the volunteers.

Mr. Connolly said they may consider changing the Spring Clean-up to a Sunday afternoon as well. He said that he has already been approached by Cub Scout Pack 188 for community clean-up opportunities in the spring.

Mr. Sorensen asked if there is a way to involve the school system with the clean-ups as an educational opportunity.

Mr. King suggested starting with a personal e-mail invitation to the SAU Superintendent.

Mr. Connolly said Mrs. Vaughn has been participating in the clean-ups herself for the last 2 years so she is aware of the clean-up projects.

Mr. King then suggested asking Mrs. Vaughn for suggestions on how to involve the students possibly as an educational or community service project.

Mr. Connolly noted that high school students are required to perform community service as one of the requirements for graduation. He said the Commission has been interested in getting students involved in conservation issues over the past few years and he plans to reach out to the

schools in the spring when they begin preparations for the Spring Clean-up.

Mr. Sorensen said he collected 80 lbs. of glass from 3 window frames improperly disposed of at the bridge on River Road.

Ms. Bogardus said someone dumped 3 bags of recycling materials on the French property and wondered what the point was to sort the materials just to dump them somewhere.

Mr. Connolly said on his days off he rides around town to “eyeball” the conservation properties and was pleased to see an on-duty police officer making the rounds to check the properties just ahead of him. He said the Commission is very fortunate to have the support of the Police and Public Works Depts. and the Board of Selectmen.

C). Permaculture Forum- Mr. Connolly thanked the Friends of Farmington for allowing the Commission to host the forum at their building on Sept. 20. He also thanked Alena Warren from the Strafford County Conservation District and the speaker for the evening that came from Keene, NH. He said some people who were unable to attend the forum have asked for a repeat of the presentation.

Mr. Fisher said about 25 people attended the forum.

Mr. King said he attended the forum and found it to be a very interesting presentation and came away with some good ideas.

Mr. Connolly said he would contact Ms. Warren and ask her to schedule another forum in late winter/early spring.

D). Master Gardener Course- Mr. Fisher said that UNH offers a Master Gardener course and asked if the Commission would be interested in sponsoring a member to take the course. A Master Gardener as a Commission member would be beneficial to the Commission and to residents as the course includes gardening, soil testing, erosion control, etc. he said.

Mr. King said the land adjacent to the water tower on Bay Road that was previously used as a community garden is still available for gardening use and the Town has allowed individuals to continue to garden there even though the group that oversaw the project has disbanded. He suggested that one of the individuals from that group may be interested in taking the course.

Mr. Sorensen suggested small spaces around town such as traffic islands and road sides could be used to grow fruits and vegetables in permaculture gardens for low income/disabled residents who are unable to get to the community garden.

Mr. Fisher said he was personally interested in the subject and would offer his services to the community once he completed the course if approved. He added that the group running the community garden did the best they could but had difficulty getting volunteers with the time to properly maintain the area. He suggested the Commission take on trying to get the garden open again and said he would consider taking on the project himself.

Mr. Connolly said the Commission at that time discussed taking on this project but the members did not have the time needed to properly manage it. He said he was in favor of having a community garden or “adopt-a-spot gardens” and asked any interested member to bring a proposal with a “business plan” before the Commission for discussion.

Mr. King said the Town may be able to provide assistance with notification of the projects by e-

mail, website and the local cable TV channel.

Mr. Connolly said physical or financial assistance may be available from local businesses.

Mr. Sorensen said the UNH Cooperative Extension may provide discounted services to the town.

E). Moonlight Hike @ Leary's- Mr. Connolly said the walk was postponed from its original date and held on October 6. No Commission members were available to attend. He said that according to the Moose Mountain Face book page, the event went well with good weather and about a dozen participants.

F). McCarthy Trail Update – Mr. Fisher said the bench base would be completed the next day.

Mr. Connolly said he expected that the plaque for the memorial bench will be completed soon.

He said once the plaque is completed that he and Mr. Fisher would take the base and the plaque and pick out a piece of granite to complete the bench for installation at the trail.

Mr. Connolly reported that about half of character cutouts have been completed by Home Depot.

Ms. Bogardus asked about the plans for the old water tower on the trail.

Mr. Connolly said the Deputy DPW Director visited the old water tower and they discussed installing a metal plate over the open well, leaving the antique well pump machinery there and install a fence around it so people can view it without risk of injury. He said the Deputy Director also suggested using the existing pipes sticking out of the ground as the base for a sitting bench.

Mr. Connolly said there is graffiti on the tower which may be something the Con Com can fix.

Mr. King suggested that an artistic group of young people could paint something nice there.

Mr. Orvis asked if the trail is wheelchair accessible.

Mr. Sorensen said the beginning of the trail is a little harsh but the rest of the trail is not bad.

Mr. Connolly said going from the parking lot to the old woods trail is “do-able”. The rest of the trail will be fairly level with some brush clean-up he said.

Mr. Orvis said he asked if it could be advertised as a handicapped accessible trail or if it could be brought into a condition where they could advertise it as a handicapped accessible trail.

Mr. Sorensen suggested an application of stone dust would provide a more level surface in some areas along the trail.

Mr. Connolly said there is a portion of the trail that goes uphill that may be challenging for a handicapped person. He said the area is not steep and suggested they visit the site and have Mr. Orvis determine the grade level of the land there.

Mr. Fisher said when he was installing the trail signs he found an area where a small gully is located and suggested a small bridge may have to be installed there.

Mr. Orvis suggested finding someone with an off-road wheelchair and ask them to try accessing the trail and then provide feedback to the Commission about their experiences.

Mr. Connolly said he expected the bench would be completed by the end of the month and then it would be a matter of when the Home Depot employee is able to complete the wood cutouts.

G). Any Other Old Business- None

7). New Business:

A). Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) - Mr. Connolly said he received notice from UNH that the EAB has been found in Strafford County and Farmington is now part of a quarantined area. The notice

went on to describe the destructiveness of the invasive insects, listed the counties under quarantine for the movement of Ash products and resources available to learn more about the pests. He said he brought the notice to the members' attention because of a preparation checklist provided with the notice suggesting the formation of a group of "key players" in town to identify roles and responsibilities in creating a response plan.

Ms. Bogardus and Ms. Taylor volunteered to head up the project for the Commission.

Mr. King asked what land owners and communities can do about the problem.

Mr. Orvis said individual trees can be sprayed to save those trees but an entire forest can't be sprayed.

Mr. King asked how a land owner would spray an 80 foot tree.

Ms. Bogardus explained the insecticide is applied at ground level and enters the tree's root system.

Mr. Connolly said the answer to those kinds of questions can be gathered by Ms. Bogardus and made available to the community. He suggested the Commission may also want to host a repeat of the EAB forum held several years ago.

Mr. Connolly said he was also concerned about the effect this will have on the planned timber harvest at the Town Forest.

Mr. Orvis said the quarantine doesn't affect saw logs as much as it does firewood because the logging trucks can be inspected easily. The way firewood is tossed into vehicle makes it difficult to inspect every piece of firewood he said.

Mr. Connolly said the problem is going to affect revenues because if the logging truck is found to have infected product on it, it can't go out of the county and there are no paper mills in this area.

Mr. King said there is a hardwood processing facility near Route 4.

Mr. Orvis said the wood could be sent to another quarantined county for processing. He said the biggest loss in revenue would probably be because they would not be able to ship logs to Maine.

Mr. King asked how many Ash trees are on the Town Forest property.

Mr. Connolly said BH Keith would need to assess the site prior to the logging and should be able to answer Mr. King's question then.

Members then discussed providing official notice to the Town depts. and boards and how to get the word out to the public once the information has been compiled.

Ms. Bogardus said she would update the Commission as the project moves forward.

B). Any Other New Business-

1). The fifth annual Conservation Commissions Mixer hosted by the Moose Mountains Regional Greenways will be held on Oct. 26 from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Wolfeboro Town Hall. Mr. Connolly, Ms. Bogardus and Mr. Sorensen plan to attend the event.

2). NH Association of Con Com's 47th Annual Meeting is scheduled for Nov. 4 from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Pembroke Academy in Pembroke. Cost is \$65 per person for NHACC members and preregistration is required.

Motion: (Connolly, second King) to spend up to \$130 to send two members to the NHACC

Annual Meeting passed unanimously.

Mr. Sorensen and Ms. Bogardus plan to attend the meeting.

3). NHACC Dues- Mr. Connolly said 2018 membership dues of \$345 are now due. He told the members about the benefits of membership in the organization and asked if the members wished to continue membership in the NHACC.

Motion: (Bogardus, second Sorensen) to continue membership in the NHACC passed unanimously.

4). Review of Minutes- Sept. 13, 2017

Page 1, Item #4, Barry 4H Camp- line 10, strike the word “he” and add the word “his” after the word “during”.

Motion: (Orvis, second Fisher) to approve the minutes as amended passed 6-0-1 (King abstained).

8). FYI:

Mr. Connolly said he received a Notice of Extension of the Wetlands Mitigation/Restoration Permit for Barry’s River on Meaderboro Road from the NH Dept. of Environmental Services.

9). November Dates:

A). NHACC Annual Meeting- Nov.4, 2017 from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

B). Next Commission meeting Nov. 8, 2017 at 6 p.m.

10). Any Other Business: None

11). Adjournment:

Motion: (Orvis, second Bogardus) to adjourn the meeting passed unanimously at 8:35 p.m.

Respectively submitted

Kathleen Magoon

Recording Secretary

Dave Connolly, Chairman