

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 13, 2011
5:00-7:00pm**

**NO SITE VISITS
COMMISSION MEETING**

Members present: E. Chamberlain (chair), R. Bleyler, A. Morris, D. McIlroy, M. Mayor, J. Trummel, Judith Reeve (recording). Staff: V. Smith.

Current Business

Public Hearing on Amendment of Rinker-Steele Natural Area Management Plan

Commission members discussed the proposed wording for the Mountain Biking Section in the Management Recommendations. Comments have been received from the Hanover Conservation Council and the Hanover Improvement Society. The Improvement Society is supportive of the wording. The Council has submitted written comments. Many of their suggestions were incorporated into the proposal. The Open Space Committee does not recommend the Council's suggestion with regard to the timing of closing the bandit trail. The Council suggests that it should be closed when an alternative route is created. Because the Trails Committee and Open Space Committee are skeptical that an alternate route is possible, the proposed wording is that the bandit trail should be closed. The Trail Maintenance Policy which is included as an appendix in the Management Plan is to be replaced with the newly adopted one as well.

MOTION: Ed Chamberlain moved to 1.) Replace the Trail Maintenance Policy with the most up to date one adopted by the Commission 11/18/2010 and 2.) to approve the proposed wording of the Mountain Biking Section as distributed at this meeting, as follows:

Mountain Biking

Mountain biking has become popular on the Rinker-Steele property as riders enter it on trails connecting from surrounding lands and may not discern property boundaries. The Conservation Commission should direct any such use to less vulnerable parts of the natural area. Trails with origins and destinations on abutting properties that pass through a suitable area of the property may be considered and clearly signed to limit mountain bike use to those trail sections only.

Steep slopes and erodible soils pose a challenge to sustainable use of parts of the Rinker-Steele Natural Area by mountain bikes. The access road from Hanover Improvement Society property, which Hanover Improvement Society controls and manages, is well suited for bike use, and should be the preferred route. Portions of the "bandit" bike trail created by mountain bikers entering from the north that have been deemed unsustainable should be closed.

The Conservation Commission may close any trail at any time to uses that are deemed damaging to the trail or immediate environs. Whenever a change is considered, the Commission should coordinate with managers of neighboring properties and their user groups in order to develop a more manageable and sustainable plan for the long term.

Motion seconded by Michael Mayor.
Passed: Unanimously approved.

Public Hearing on Purchase of a Conservation Easement on 3.1 acres of land in Etna

Vicki Smith reported the Selectboard supported the Storrs Farm Conservation Project, presented to the board last week. If Town Meeting approves the use of the Conservation Fund for this project, \$150,000 will be used to purchase the easement. The Open Space Committee has drafted a letter which seeks lead support in the fundraising for the additional \$58,000 needed to purchase the easement. Once a response has been received, letters will be sent asking for donations to complete the purchase.

Using \$150,000 from the Conservation Fund for this project and respecting the set-aside for permanent protection of the Hayes Upper Meadow and Trescott Ridge Wetlands, leaves the Conservation Fund with \$8,000. The town with the Commission's help needs to work for a different funding source for Conservation Commission work, including land conservation. The traditional funding is 50% of the Land Use Change Tax. For the present year, fifty dollars (\$50) is the sole contribution to the Fund.

MOTION: A. Morris moved to close hearing to discuss finances. M. Mayor seconded. Unanimously approved. 5:20pm 5:50pm Meeting reopened to public session. The Commission voted unanimously to proceed with this purchase.

Landscape Policy on Town Property and Mission Statement for Biodiversity Committee
Judy Reeve reported that the Biodiversity Committee met on 4/12/11 at the Howe Library. Barbara McIlroy took notes to be submitted at a later date. After discussions about landscape policy and the mission for the committee with William Desch, the committee is not ready to present these proposals at this time.

Resource Stewardship

Balch Hill Management Plan

The commission has committed \$800 to the cost of the plan. The Scope of Services submitted by forester Ben Hudson was reviewed. He will be finished field work in early fall at which time he will do a public report. The Hanover Conservation Council will be applying for a NRCS grant to implement the plan. The Balch Hill Management Committee will be conducting a survey of neighbors to better understand the public's response to culling the deer herd and to invasives management.

Hayes Property Work

Adair Mulligan, Hanover Conservation Council (HCC), is planning a work day at the conservation area at the top of the Hayes property for 27 April. On 4/14/11 at 1:30pm Judy Reeve, Vicki Smith, Ed Chamberlain, Adair and Gail McPeck of the HCC, and nurseryman, Elmer Brown, will meet at the site to begin planning the work for the Nan and Alan King Memorial Bird Sanctuary for the Upper Meadow of the Hayes Farm property.

Administrative Business

Commission Officers

Judy Reeve is stepping down from vice-chairman of the commission. Chairman Chamberlain will be asking another member to act as vice-chairman.

Committee Reports

Open Space Committee — Anne Morris

Anne and Vicki are working on a May 10 Town Meeting display for The Storrs Project. The commission's Selectboard representative, Athos Rassias, will be proposing the town vote in favor of the Storrs Farm Project. Vicki Smith will be available to answer any technical questions from the public.

There may be a display with the HCC to explain the differences between the two organizations.

Trails Committee — Doug McIlroy

The HCC is working with the commission's Trails Committee on a trail between Route 10 near the Mink Brook bridge and the Brook Road trailhead into the Nature Preserve and Tanzi Tract.

Volunteer Jorge Menzel will flag the route to be approved. Route will avoid the state listed endangered plant in the area. June 5th is the workday.

On 4/12/11, John Taylor and D. McIlroy meet with Karen Dubois of Stevens Road to discuss a trail link on her property between Etna Highlands Road and Mink Brook through a “scenic ravine.” April 27th is a possible workday on this trail.

The Trails Committee is working on finding “Trail Adopters” for various Hanover trails.

The Upper Valley Mountain Bikers have laid out a single-track trail in the Goodwin Forest. They used the original layout by John Morton but modified it to reduce the impacts on a forest stream.

Biodiversity Committee — Judy Reeve

The committee is still working on the Town Landscape Policy draft and refining the Biodiversity Committee’s mission. Several workdays are being scheduled with the Council for trails, plant inventories, and invasive controls at either Balch Hill, the Hayes Farm Park Upper Meadow or near Mink Brook between Route 10 & Brook Road. The next meeting will be the Tuesday before the June commission meeting, June 7th.

Trescott Company (old Water Company Land) — Ed Chamberlain

The board is working on the invasive plant infestations and land management practices.

The minutes of meetings are public because some board members are town employees.

To cost to support land management is about \$23,000/year. The Trescott Company lacks a source of revenue now that the Water Company is a separate entity.

Approval of the Minutes — March 9, 2011

MOTION: M. Mayor moved to approve the minutes as amended.

Ruth Bleyler SECONDED. 5 approved. 1 abstention.

OTHER BUSINESS

The public is alerted to the large mother bear and 3 cubs eating near the Council’s Brook Road Trail. Warning signs have been posted by the Council.