

OFFICIAL CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

February 18, 2015

S. Couture called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Attendance: Steve Couture, Chair; Cindy Robertson, Vice-Chair; Phil Fitandides, member; JoCarol Woodburn, member; Todd Lizotte, Town Council Rep.

Excused: David Hess, member; Frank Kotowski, Planning Board Rep.

Public Input

None.

Meeting Minutes

C. Robertson motioned to approve the meeting minutes for January 12, 2015. Seconded by P. Fitandides. Motion passed. T. Lizotte abstained.

Other

a. Merrimack Riverfront

i. NHDOT Application

S. Couture: The DOT grant application was not successful. I think it was pretty clear why we didn't receive the funding. We weren't competitive in two of the five categories. We were hopeful that we would get lucky but there were about forty applications, many of them very multi-modal with sidewalks and trails. Even Manchester didn't fare that well in the rankings. In the end, it was a good exercise. We still got the Stantec plan out of it.

ii. DRED Application

J. Woodburn: Are there any other upcoming grants we can apply for?

S. Couture: Potentially, there are a couple different ones but it depends on how we approach it. There are some for the culvert and bridge crossing that could be considered a restoration through the Wetlands ARM Fund. Usually, their RFP is in the spring. We probably need some consultant work on that. It would be relatively short money, but would allow us to move forward on the crossing areas at least. Other than that, maybe the Moose Plate grant. I'm not sure if they fund trail construction. We could always try to go for some foundation dollars. We should find out about DRED in a few weeks. I'm fairly confident about that one.

P. Fitanides: How much money do we need to raise?

S. Couture: It depends on if it's the whole project, which is about \$975,000, or if we do it in phases. We have the DRED application and we have \$100,000 in recreation impact fees that will be assigned to us. At a minimum, this year, we would be looking to establish a trail head, put in the bridge, and build as much trail mileage as we can. Then we need to address the stream crossings.

P. Fitanides: Any money we raise by the grants, is there a time constraint on how long we can keep that money before it's put into use?

J. Woodburn: Yes, there is a deadline and we would need to start the work this year.

P. Fitanides: Do you think companies in town would be willing to kick in some money toward it?

S. Couture: That's an option. We also have the warrant article for \$100,000 that Council recommended and it will be on the ballot.

T. Lizotte: All the warrants need to be in by the 26th. In looking for funds from big box stores, keep in mind that they get hit up constantly. It might be possible to get a few hundred dollars, but otherwise the time it takes to do that might be better spent looking at different Trusts and Foundations, things like that.

P. Fitanides: Is there anything in town that allows people to have recognition, like on a plaque? The Marginal Way in Maine has benches with names if you donate a certain amount of money. Is there anything like that in town?

T. Lizotte: I know that the schools do something like that, but that would require a marketing campaign.

S. Couture: These are all good ideas but I think we need to focus on getting access to the property first, and then we start to campaign. That's my thought on approaching it.

T. Lizotte: I like those ideas. Going back to the plaques, if you look at what's at Head's Pond, a lot of that is made out of wood that starts to degrade rapidly. We would need something more durable if we were to do that.

P. Fitanides: Most people use pressure treated lumber, but to get it to last longer you need marine grade because it's entirely different and lasts longer.

iii. Warrant Article

1. Communications Strategy

S. Couture: Our short term focus is the warrant article. We need a communications strategy to go to different groups in town, tell them what the vision is and ask for their support.

T. Lizotte: You can ask the Union Leader to do a story. Reporters are always looking for something. That would reach the voters.

S. Couture: We could do presentations to the Garden Club, Kiwanis, Hooksett-ites, and others that might support this. The thing is I can't do all the presentations because I have six weeks of travel coming up.

C. Robertson: If we had a set presentation, I would be willing to present it.

J. Woodburn: Would we need a slideshow or map or poster?

T. Lizotte: We should tailor the presentation to the voters. Tell them the amount (7 cents per \$1,000 on your house). You need to present the benefits. This is a tangible benefit that comes from a one-time payment. You need to push that.

S. Couture: Right, this is about creating long-term passive recreation for the town.

T. Lizotte: We need to present the benefit of all the investment on that property that had zero impact on their taxes, and how this is the only tax dollars that we are asking for. We might want to ask Dean Shankle about electioneering.

S. Couture: So we could talk about the project but not the warrant article?

T. Lizotte: I'm not sure, but we need to double check.

J. Woodburn: Does that apply to written materials also or just to what is presented?

T. Lizotte: Because the Commission put it together, it has to be a factual presentation. Present it as a contract explaining what we did on our end and what the voter would need to put up, and what will be accomplished by that. You can say the Commission recommended it, but not ask them to vote for it – just double check with Dean.

C. Robertson: We need to be able to answer questions from people too about what happens if we don't get the money, or how long do we have it, how long before we have to use it.

T. Lizotte: The other thing about the presentation, try to condense it to 20 minutes if you can.

C. Robertson: It would be nice to see if there are photos of someplace else that look similar to what we anticipate this trail to look like at the end of the project.

S. Couture: The other thing is, we could try to Photoshop the pictures of the fields and show what it would look like. We can include pictures of the Head's Pond trail to compare to.

J. Woodburn: Who else would we need to visit to get the word out? Does Kiwanis have a publication?

T. Lizotte: Yes, they do. We will reach more people with the Union Leader article.

S. Couture: The timing of the article is important too. Maybe April?

J. Woodburn: Should we put together a press release?

T. Lizotte: We should just reach out to our local Hooksett reporter. The article in Forest Notes would be a good reference for the article.

J. Woodburn: I think we need a fact sheet.

C. Robertson: The most impact will be from photos. Once they see what it looks like they will be interested.

J. Woodburn: It would be nice to know if the bridge will be going in by then.

S. Couture: We should know in a few weeks. We have all of March and April to promote the warrant article. We won't want the article to run until April anyway. We should start to pull together a Powerpoint.

J. Woodburn: I can put a shell together and send it out.

S. Couture: It should only be about ten slides. We have some pictures that we can include.

P. Fitanides: We can do DVD videos or stills and show or distribute it. We can do that if you decide to.

J. Woodburn: As long as we all have PowerPoint, we can store it on our laptops.

T. Lizotte: I can work on some animation if you send me some photos.

J. Woodburn: Didn't someone mention that they were going to clear a path by the rowing club? Did Leo from DPW say that? That's something that could be shown as a before and after. Also, do we need an "elevator pitch" that we can talk about while we're out?

T. Lizotte: I like that idea so that our message is consistent.

S. Couture: Presentations could start in March maybe.

C. Robertson: Yes, it gives them time to talk to other people.

S. Couture: I like the idea of the elevator speech. We could get together a basic skeleton of a Power Point and a fact sheet. Todd can work on the photos. Carolyn can work on the map. That's enough to go on for now since we will be meeting again in four weeks. That gives us enough to do.

iv. Cornfield Agreement; Field Maintenance

S. Couture: At some point we need to have the discussion about having an agreement in place for the agricultural use of the corn fields. Nothing happened with it last year despite the biosolids permit. We have a current agreement with a farmer, Ever Green, I think, who has historically been planting and harvesting it. I think we should start with him, get something in writing, and

see where it goes from there. If he doesn't want to we should start with the Merrimack County Conservation District and get recommendations from them. I'd like to have Dave here when we talk about that. We want to make sure it is maintained in the way that we planned it would be.

T. Lizotte: My only concern would be that people see it as public land and try to pick it.

P. Fitanides: We could get SNHU, UNH Cooperative Extension or farmers in Hooksett to do it.

T. Lizotte: We also need to look at it from a liability standpoint.

S. Couture: This is an ongoing discussion we need to have so we should keep this on the agenda.

b. Peter's Brook Property Deficit

S. Couture: I'm still waiting to hear back from Bear Paw to see if they would be interested in holding the easements on those properties. Dan is coming to our April meeting, I believe.

c. Stewardship Fee – Planning Board Consideration

S. Couture: This is on the Planning Board agenda tonight. I'll be attending for a brief conversation. They are considering whether or not to build it into their administrative fee table.

d. Clay Pond Stewardship Plan

S. Couture: They got the go ahead. They are just asking for a little more time because of scheduling. One thing that did happen is that Hanscom Lambert is done. We secured the easements and recorded everything. It will now be included as an addendum to the Clay Pond Stewardship Plan. The next step is to get the final document and post it. In the spring, we should schedule a walk out there with Leo and scope out where we want to put the gates because that was identified as a priority for this year.

J. Woodburn: Who pays for the gates?

S. Couture: It will probably come out of our Conservation Fund.

T. Lizotte: There was concern about gates from Councilor Duhaime on snowmobiling out there. My interpretation was that he thought the gates would block snowmobiles.

S. Couture: I could have answered that question, but I wasn't clear that that was what he was looking for. In any case, the Council approved the plan. Thanks to JoCarol for her work on that.

e. Internship Job Description

C. Cronin: I started working on a job description and posting. I was looking at other conservation intern job descriptions as templates. I also talked to someone from the UNH Stewardship Network, Malin Clyde, as I told you last time. For tonight, I was hoping you would let me know if you had any comments, questions or suggestions on the job description. There was some concern brought up, via email, from Cindy about the sensory and physical requirements from a disability standpoint. I did forward that on to Administration so they can look into it and am waiting to hear back. As far as the process, I'm waiting for direction from Administration on how to move forward with it. In the meantime, I'm working on hammering out the details of the job description right now so I will have a final product when we are ready to move forward. Basically, the job would be easement monitoring so they would be out in the field going to the properties we have, making sure that they are in compliance with the terms of the deed. Ideally, the intern would be doing some research before going out there, so we could have them produce a database and list out each property and what the terms are of the deeds are, so ultimately we will have it all in one place what the specific restrictions are. When they are at the properties they can be looking to make sure no one has built anything, someone's property line isn't encroaching on it, there's no dumping, no tree cutting, no ATV tracks. It's important that this is done because we need to hold up our end of the agreement, but we can't do that with just a volunteer Commission.

J. Woodburn: How long is the internship for?

C. Cronin: We are looking for two months (June and July) with full-time hours and see where it goes from there. As far as hours, you want to figure out how much total you want to pay the intern and then we can work backwards to figure out a schedule. I'm not 100% sure where the money would come from, the Conservation Fund? We could check that. This person would be considered a Town of Hooksett employee, which means they would have to meet all of our town requirements including a physical, drug testing, divers license, everything.

T. Lizotte: I notice that the hours say 9am to 4pm, but those aren't the Town hours.

C. Cronin: Right, those aren't the Town office hours but Malin from UNH suggested that this internship might be someone's first job and they are going to be out exposed in the field all day, so you don't want to give them a full 40-hour work week. Plus if they are out in the field, I want to make sure they get back OK before the end of the day. 9am to 4pm was my suggestion because that would work out to a 32.5 hour work week at \$10/hour for two months and the total would be \$2,600 that we pay them. That's the typical amount for an intern. If we wanted to spend \$2,400, they could do 30 hours per week (9am to 3:30pm) at \$10/hour for two months. Those are just my suggestions.

S. Couture: The focus of this would be on an undergrad student?

C. Cronin: Yes, a grad student typically would want a research project as opposed to something in the field.

C. Robertson: If they have time, it would be nice to have this information for our website: a list of properties, where they are and how to get to them.

S. Couture: I think we could be flexible on the duration. Maybe 3 months if they want to start early, or 4 months if they want to work until school starts again.

C. Cronin: HR told me that for the sake of posting the job, we need to have a set duration so that it's clear that it's a temporary position. Moving forward if we do want to keep them on longer, then we would have to get the position reapproved or amended.

S. Couture: I can check what DES pays their interns. I believe it's in the \$12-\$14/hour range.

T. Lizotte: I pay my college undergrad intern \$10/hour to shadow. The fact is that you're giving them an opportunity to see the inner workings of things. You want a person who understands that the internship is the most important thing, not the pay.

S. Couture: I think \$10/hour is fine.

C. Cronin: The other side of it is finding out what their academic requirements are to receive credit. I know that typically the school expects some kind of deliverable or a certain number of hours. Whether that comes up in the interview process or at some other point, we need to figure out what the school needs so this person can get academic credit.

S. Couture: Yes, that's a good conversation to have.

C. Robertson: If you get somebody who's seriously interested and wants the credit and not the pay; that could happen too.

C. Cronin: At this point you all could go over the duties and responsibilities and let me know if you have questions or changes, while I await further direction.

T. Lizotte: I've found that you need to pre-plan 50% of their time with fill-in stuff. You have to have that prepared before they arrive. That comes back to the character of the applicant too, having someone that will jump in.

S. Couture: Todd brings up some great points. Once we get the OK to post the job, what are your plans for interviewing candidates? Do you want us to participate in that?

C. Cronin: If you have time, I would love for you to be there. If you're unavailable, maybe someone else from the Commission could do that with me. It's also important for the intern to meet you and see what you do. Maybe if they came to one or two meetings to sit in. If any of you are available some of those days in the summer to buddy up with them and go out to do the monitoring that would be great so they can get some interaction and learn.

T. Lizotte: There should be a set list of tasks they need to complete before they go out, like a form they need to fill out with information in the property.

J. Woodburn: It's a good idea to give them a check list of what to look for at the properties.

C. Robertson: Bear Paw put on a few workshops on easement monitoring. They may have templates for that. I can see if I can find them.

T. Lizotte: Is there anything we need to purchase for them? Do they need a GPS?

C. Cronin: We don't have a GPS currently. I could ask other departments if they have one to lend us.

J. Woodburn: How many properties do we have?

C. Cronin: There are 36 properties, some are half an acre, some are 72 acres, so we need to discuss prioritizing.

J. Woodburn: We could focus on the ones that we hold the easement on.

S. Couture: Cindy can look into easement check lists, we will need to explore finding a GPS, and then take it from there. Thank you for your work on this. Hopefully we will get the go ahead soon.

C. Cronin: Thank you for going over this with me and bringing up some really good points. I appreciate it.

v. Other Business

J. Woodburn: Are we going to do a spring clean-up again?

C. Cronin: I would like to if you are all on board. Diane from Transfer and Recycle is on board too. Their Recycle day is April 25th this year.

S. Couture: We received permit for a 24-inch culvert for SNHU at their baseball field. It's a 110 square feet of temporary impact. I don't think we need to see that.

T. Lizotte motioned to approve signing off on the SNHU Baseball Press Box Culvert Replacement NHDES Permit by Notification application. Seconded by P. Fitanides. Motion passed.

S. Couture: In other mail, GE had a request for more information on their AOT application because the impact is in a mapped floodplain area. They need to provide documentation that there is no loss of floodplain. Everything else is correspondence from Pike, which we already talked about, and that's it for business.

C. Robertson motioned to adjourn at 5:42 pm. Seconded by T. Lizotte. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Cronin

Assistant Planner/Conservation Commission Staff Support