

# **Jaffrey Conservation Commission**

## **Minutes**

### **May 27, 2009**

**Present:** *Jim Bearce*

*John O. Field, Chair*

*Bill Graf*

*Nora Barton Bryant*

*Carolyn Garretson*

*Kathy Batchelder, Selectmen's representative*

**Absent:** *Ron Rogstad, Alternate*

*Pat Weiner, Alternate*

**Guest:** *Paul St. Pierre* of 5 Wheeler Street, Jaffrey

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:08 PM. Bill Graf was appointed as scribe.

*Minutes* of the previous meeting, held on April 22, 2009, were reviewed and revised by changing the acronym "DOT" on page 3 to "DRED." The corrected minutes were approved on a motion by NBB, seconded by JB.

## **PRIORITY ITEMS**

### **1. CHILDREN'S WOODS AND CAREY PARK**

Paul St. Pierre requested permission to address the Commission. He and Jim Bearce have taken on the task of clearing the paths in Children's Woods and Carey Park of the trees and branches downed during last December's ice storm.

Mr. St. Pierre thanked JB for cutting logs to a manageable size. Tom Meehan's seventh grade science class went through the main trail and pushed all logs and branches off to the side. All trails are now cleared.

Mr. St. Pierre then presented a list of suggestions to the Commission:

1. The foot bridge on the main trail from Stratton Road needs to be repaired.
2. The trails should be named and marked. At one time there were signs, but they have since been ripped down. Use of paint or colored plastic markers might be an alternative.
3. There should be a map of Children's Woods and Carey Park available to the public. JOF explained that this was presently being explored and might be combined with a map of the CPCA.

4. Carey Road is in need of repair. Gravel is needed in the flooded areas; and there should be gates, especially at the Stratton Road entrance. JOF said he would discuss these ideas with Mike Hartman and that Gordon Fund monies could be used.

*Postscript: Mr. Hartman informed JOF (conversation on 6/1/09) that, under state law, the town cannot maintain a Class VI road. (Maintenance automatically reclassifies the road to Class V.) The only exception is when fire engine access is needed to protect houses and related structures. Similarly, the town cannot gate against public access on a Class VI road. Gates and bars are allowed only to keep out animals.*

Discussion ensued as to whether the Commission may repair of the foot bridge on its own. It was decided that the Commission can act given its oversight responsibility for Children's Woods and its holding Gordon Fund revenues for maintenance. On a motion by CG, seconded by BG, it was voted to approve up to \$500 for materials to replace the bridge. The motion passed unanimously. JB and Paul St. Pierre volunteered to provide the labor.

JB suggested that we post the opening of the trails on our website, with acknowledgement of volunteer help, and that we now turn our efforts to the CPCA. This received general agreement, and Mr. St. Pierre further suggested that we contact the New England Forestry Foundation for information about its stewardship program for the forests under its care.

Two other matters raised by Mr. St. Pierre (email dated 5/15/09) will be discussed at another time. They are (1) identifying and labeling trees in Children's Woods (a school project, perhaps) and (2) establishing a volunteer stewardship program to maintain trails, pick up trash, and otherwise enhance the public's use and enjoyment of the park.

## **2. COMMISSION FINANCES: THE CONSERVATION FUND, LINE-ITEM TRACKING, AND ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION**

**Conservation Fund:** CG provided the Commission with an updated monthly financial report. The end-of-month balance for May 2009 is \$17,312.76. Of this, \$3,725 is due Kane and Ingraham upon completion of the NRI, and \$6,000 is committed to the McKelvie/Frost Pond easement transaction fees. Not counting commitments made at this meeting, the Conservation Fund has \$7,587.76 in uncommitted revenue available for discretionary spending.

**LUCT:** CG reported that the Commission has not been credited with any LUCT revenues for the current year thus far and that no known revenues are in the pipeline.

**Natural Resource Inventory:** The final \$3,725 of the contracted \$14,725 will be paid to Kane and Ingraham upon receipt of the final report and all maps. This payment will close out the NRI account. However, additional funds will be needed to cover expenses associated with printing copies of the report, reproducing core maps, and laminating a set of maps.

**Gray Goose Easement:** JOF received the proposal from Jeff Littleton for annual monitoring

services for 2010 and 2011. Mr. Littleton will walk the property with Commission members in the fall of 2009, the first anniversary of the Baseline Documentation Report (BDR), for a charge of \$200. In the spring of 2010 and 2011 he will conduct the annual monitoring and train the Commission in the monitoring process for \$500 per year. JOF moved to accept his proposal and to budget \$200 for the current year and \$500 for each of the following two years. Seconded by CG, the motion passed unanimously.

**Gordon Fund (Children's Woods):** At the April meeting of the Commission there were two proposals for use of Gordon Fund moneys. The first of these was to use funds for repairs to the trestle bridge on Rails-to-Trails south of Carey Park. After investigation by JB, it was learned that the trestle bridge is on state-owned property and will be repaired by the Trails Bureau of DRED at state expense. A second proposal was to use the fund to hire a professional company to clear the trails in Children's Woods and Carey Park. As noted in #1 above, this was accomplished with volunteer labor. The only project-related use of Gordon moneys to date is the \$500 budgeted for repair of the foot bridge near Stratton Road (see above).

Also concerning the Gordon Fund, the **Trustees of the Trust Fund** have accepted \$4,252.50 as the true charge to the Conservation Commission for the Vorce, Soney survey of Children's Woods. This figure will be used when calculating reimbursements to the Conservation Fund rather than the \$4,002.50 originally documented. To date the Gordon Fund has reimbursed the Conservation Fund \$1,650 for the survey. The Commission decided to suspend any additional reimbursement of the remaining \$2,602.50 pending further use of Gordon moneys for project work in Children's Woods in 2009. It is expected that a further drawdown of the reimbursement will occur by the end of the year in an amount to be determined by the interest still available from 2008.

**CPCA:** CG distributed a spreadsheet for the CPCA. \$1,000 has been budgeted for maintenance and improvements this year, with \$91 having been spent to date on printing copies of the management plan.

The newly created **Conservation Support Fund** has a balance of \$300 after the \$200 contribution in April to The Thorndike Pond Conservation Association in support of the Lake Host Program.

CG intends to prepare a **budget for 2009** to present at the June meeting of the Commission.

JOF reviewed the request for continued scholarship support for **Camp Wildwood** and explained the procedures used to identify candidates and award scholarships in the past. Due to the late date there was insufficient time to advertise for candidates or to reevaluate the process. JB moved to award \$300 in scholarship money from the Conservation Support Fund to be shared by **Sabrina and Anya Shemet** for the coming summer. A determination of how the Commission will participate in the program in coming years will be decided at a future date. Seconded by BG, the motion passed unanimously. *Postscript: JOF notified Mrs. Shemet and Camp Wildwood of the Commission's award on May 29, 2009.*

Turning to new business, JOF reviewed the request by the **Harris Center** for a \$50 donation

from each of ten local conservation commissions toward making environmental awards at Conval and Conant high schools. JOF used his usual donation to the Harris Center as a gift on behalf of the Jaffrey Conservation Commission. NBB and BG will draft a set of guidelines for responding to future appeals and requests for support.

At its April meeting the Commission passed a resolution to make an annual contribution to the **Land Acquisition Capital Reserve Fund (LACRF)** from unexpended revenue obtained during the year from the **Land Use Change Tax (LUCT)**. The intended transfers have since been cleared as legal by Town Council Kelly Dowd (letter to Mike Hartman dated April 29, 2009). The Commission will vote on an actual amount at its last meeting of each year.

JOF reported on the opportunity for Jaffrey to join the Monadnock Conservancy's **Community Conservation Partnership** later in 2009. Towns wishing to participate in the program will be required to contribute grant matching funds, which are expected to be in the range of \$2,000 to \$5,000 depending on the needs of the town and the scope of services to be provided. JOF asked whether the Commission would be willing to pay this fee out of the Conservation Fund if necessary. The Commission expressed its willingness to do so in principle, noting that accessing MC's expertise is timely given completion of the Natural Resource Inventory, establishment of the Land Acquisition Capital Reserve Fund, and the likely creation of an Open Space Committee to oversee land purchases and easements. JOF informed the Commission that he has invited representatives of MC to come to Jaffrey to explain the Community Conservation Partnership at a public presentation to which relevant town boards and committees would be invited.

*Postscript: Peter Throop, the Monadnock Conservancy's director of the Community Conservation Partnership, has invited JOF to a meeting at MC's offices in Keene to discuss Jaffrey's participation, including the idea of a public presentation in Jaffrey to expand public awareness and interest. The meeting is scheduled for June 26, 2009.*

JOF sought and received the Commission's support for his seeking an increase in next year's **town appropriation**. This is essential to maintaining and strengthening the Conservation Support Fund. A specific request will be presented to the Budget Committee at the appropriate time.

### **3. CHESHIRE POND CONSERVATION AREA (CPCA)**

JB reported that Children's Woods and Carey Park have received first priority since the ice storm. The clean-up effort will now shift to the CPCA, and Paul St. Pierre has expressed an interest in helping there, as he did in Children's Woods.

JOF reported that a brochure-with-map for the CPCA will probably be contracted out. One option is to prepare a single brochure for both the CPCA and Children's Woods since they are relatively close to one another. On the other hand, the naming and marking of trails in Children's Woods and Carey Park (see #1 above) could delay preparation of the brochure, as the Commission will have to decide how to go about naming the trails. How best to proceed is still

being explored.

## **UPDATES**

### **4. NATURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY**

Detailed edits of the final draft were sent to Kane and Ingraham on May 14, 2009. The completed report with all maps should be delivered to the Commission shortly. *Postscript: All deliverables were received on June 15, 2009.*

### **5. GRAY GOOSE FARM: BASELINE DOCUMENTATION REPORT (BDR)**

JOF phoned Temple Pond on May 1, 2009 to urge him to sign the legal page of the BDR (“Affidavit of Inspection”) as an owner of land covered by the conservation easement. Jeff Littleton of Moosewood Ecological LLC reports that Mr. Pond has done so (email of 5/20/09). With this signature, the BDR is now complete. Mr. Littleton intends to send the Commission a bound printed copy of the final report along with a CD containing the final report, with maps and photographs, for the Commission’s future use. *Postscript: Both the printed copy and CD were received by mail on June 9, 2009 and have been stored in Jo Anne Carr’s office along with other Commission documents.*

### **6. RIVEREST (7/25/09)**

PW represented the Commission at Team Jaffrey’s organizational meeting. Kathy Batchelder confirmed that the Commission’s tent will be relocated to the Civic Center common this year. Greater emphasis will be placed on providing educational materials to the public than in the recent past. Details concerning set-up and display (NRI maps, etc.) are still being worked out, with NBB playing the lead role.

### **7. TOWN WEBSITE**

NBB reported that there were no Commission-related changes to the town website in April. The Gray Goose BDR will be added when ready. *Postscript: Mark Kresge picked up the CD on June 11, 2009 and will add BDR text and maps to the website before the end of the month.*

## **8. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE**

The first meeting of this new town committee was held on May 12, 2009. JOF is a member. He reported that, at some point, the Commission will have to request funding for the **Land Acquisition Capital Reserve Fund (LACRF)** as a CIP component. Based on what other towns in the Monadnock region have been contributing to their own land acquisition funds, he suggested seeking an amount in the \$15-25K range for 2010 and each of the five years to follow. (The CIP budgets projects over a rolling six-year timeframe, with actual allocations made annually.) The objective is to build LACRF as quickly as possible to the point when it can be used for the next round of land and easement purchases. To expedite the process and to supplement the town's appropriation through CIP, the Commission has already voted to contribute as much of its LUCT revenues each year as possible to this end (see #1 above). *Postscript: JOF will present a six-year plan for CIP allocations to LACRF at the June 24, 2009 meeting of the Commission.*

## **9. CHILDREN'S EDUCATION**

No report was possible due to PW's absence.

## **10. BREMNER/471 GILMORE POND ROAD**

Legal exchanges between the Bremners and the Micheles continue concerning the former's seasonal dock permit on the latter's property, which was approved by DES in February. On May 11, 2009 the Micheles filed suit in Cheshire County Superior Court to have the Bremners' easement invalidated as an illegal subdivision. Validity of the suit is being contested by the Bremners.

## **11. YOUNGS/FITZWILLIAM ROAD**

On April 27, 2009 DES sent Ms. Youngs a "Notice of Administrative Completeness" in reference to her Minimum Impact Expedited Application to install six utility poles in wetlands along the dirt road leading to a potential house site on her property (see the Minutes of the Commission's meeting on April 22, 2009).

On May 13, 2009 DES sent Ms. Youngs a "Request for More Information". At issue are culverts - existing and prospective - and "any additional wetland impacts associated with upgrading the access way to a driveway".

## **12. ANNUAL DUES**

Notice of annual dues has been received for Jaffrey's membership in the Contoocook & North Branch Rivers Local Advisory Committee (CBRLAC). JOF will look into who is responsible for payment. *Postscript: The town will pay out of the General Fund.*

## **DELIBERATION**

### **13. THE COMMISSION'S MEMBERSHIP**

The Commission resumed consideration of prospective new members and whom among them to approach. (The Commission is entitled to have seven full members; we have five at present. There is no limit to the number of alternate members; we have two at present.) There was discussion concerning the establishment of a Search Committee to expedite the process, but most favored first setting up an informational meeting and inviting prospective members. In the interim it was agreed that CG would meet with two persons who had indicated an interest on the form available at Town Meeting. BG also volunteered to attend the meeting, and JOF will follow up as appropriate. Activation of a Search Committee is on hold pending completion of these overtures.

## **OPEN TALK**

### **14. UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS**

JOF noted several meetings and events of possible interest that will be held in coming months and provided fliers for inspection. Notable among them are two showings of a film by Evan Barlow entitled "Swanzey: Rural Character" scheduled for May 30, 2009 at the Monadnock Regional High School in Swanzey.

## **ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 PM. The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Commission will be on *Wednesday, June 24, 2009*, 7 PM at the Town Offices.

Respectfully submitted,

William Graf