

Jaffrey Conservation Commission

Minutes

August 26, 2009

Present: Jim Bearce

Nora Barton Bryant

John O. Field, *Chair*

Carolyn D. Garretson

Bill Graf

Pat Weiner, *Alternate*

Kathy Batchelder, *Selectmen's representative*

Absent: Ron Rogstad, *Alternate*

PRELIMINARY

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM, with ***John O. Field*** as scribe.
2. **Minutes** of the Commission's last meeting, held on ***July 29, 2009***, were reviewed and approved subject to changes submitted before Monday, July 31. (There were none.)
3. **Comments from the Chair**

The principal item on the agenda for this meeting is selection of a new Chair. Kathy Batchelder, the Selectmen's representative, will facilitate the discussion.

There are two other items on the agenda that have priority. These concern moving forward with the proposal to establish an Open Space Committee for Jaffrey and with the option of Jaffrey's participating in the Monadnock Community Conservation Partnership. The focus of both issues has been narrowed to make them more manageable, the objective at this point being simply to keep the process moving if that is the will of the Commission.

The Commission is close to resolving issues involving finances that have been under discussion for some time. There are decisions to be made on them and on other matters, as time permits.

The rest of the agenda is either informational or routine.

PRIORITY ITEMS

4. **The Conduct of Business and Selection of a New Chair**

Facilitator: **Kathy Batchelder**, Selectmen's Representative

The Commission considered its mission and responsibilities and then turned to how it manages the work load.

There was **general agreement** that....

- The work load is heavy and growing; also that it is becoming more technical and complicated.
- The agenda is too large, and meetings are too long. There is need for greater prioritization.
- The position of Chair has become burdensome.
- Members receive too many emails from the Chair. Information overload makes it difficult to keep track of important matters.

No decision: A new Chair was not selected, as there were no volunteers.

Decision: PW will serve as scribe for three months starting with the September 2009 meeting. She will prepare minutes without any further vetting by the Chair.

Decision: Kathy Batchelder will draft the agenda for the September meeting and send it to the incumbent Chair for completion.

Options for future consideration:

1. Chair

- Rotate
- Co-chairs
- The Chair should be a facilitator, not a driver.
- The Chair should set time limits for specific topics on the agenda.

2. Meetings

- Place a time limit on meetings with a 2-hour maximum.
- Meet twice a month, as necessary.

3. Scribe

- Select one member to scribe rather than rotate.
- Hire an outside person to record minutes (cost: circa \$25/meeting).

4. Responsibilities

- Distribute the workload by allocating responsibilities to different members, as re: finances, minutes, agenda, specific tasks, and reports to the Commission.

5. **Open Space Committee**

JOF received the Commission's permission to continue working, in the name of the Commission, on submission to the Selectmen of the proposal to establish an Open Space Committee for Jaffrey. JOF has revised the initial draft, finalized the revisions in dialogue with Jo Anne Carr, and circulated the new draft to members of the Commission. When the diagram depicting the recommended deliberation and decision process is completed, the draft will be reviewed by Mike Hartman, Town Manager, before submission to the Selectmen.

Postscript: JOF gave Mr. Hartman the completed draft of the proposal, with appendices on state statutes governing expenditures from the Land Acquisition Capital Reserve Fund, on September 3, 2009.

6. **Jaffrey's Participation in the Monadnock Community Conservation Partnership (MCCP)**

The Commission authorized JOF to plan for a public briefing in October to introduce MCCP to town officials and interested citizens. The intent of the briefing will be to determine whether sentiment warrants proposing Jaffrey's participation in MCCP to the Selectmen. JOF will work with Peter Throop, Project Director of MCCP at the Monadnock Conservancy, on the briefing.

Postscript: JOF and Mr. Throop met September 10, 2009 to prepare for the briefing in Jaffrey, which is scheduled for October 21, 2009 from 5:30 to 7 PM in the downstairs conference room at the Jaffrey Town Offices. Invitations to the Selectmen, Planning Board, Budget Committee, Town Manager and Director of Planning and Economic Development have been sent. The ZBA and others will be invited soon.

7. **COMMISSION FINANCES**

CDG passed out a new spreadsheet for the Conservation Fund. Given the lateness of the hour, it was not possible to review this document in any detail. Both it and the several project spreadsheets will be examined at the September meeting of the Commission, at which time the several outstanding questions on this month's agenda will also be addressed.

ITEMS FOR DELIBERATION AND DECISION

8. Underwood/474 Great Road

The Commission decided not to follow up, at this time, on its overture to Mr. C. Jerome Underwood about preserving a portion of his family's 294 acres, as the family was scheduled to meet in August and the Commission is awaiting a response from him. Any developments will be noted at the September meeting of the Commission.

*Postscript: The Commission has learned that USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service has offered to assume a permanent easement on the Underwood property, or a meaningful portion of it, under the **Wetlands Reserve Program**. This is the same program that may protect the Greene family property (see #11 below).*

9. Other Agenda Items

The following topics are to be carried over to future meetings of the commission, as warranted.

- Guidelines for the Conservation Support Fund
- Bringing new people onto the Commission
- Riverfest assessment
- Projects and issues concerning Children's Woods
- Management of the Cheshire Pond Conservation Area
- Community outreach
- Children's education
- Foamy water in the brook near First Tavern Road

Two information items are referenced in the Appendix below.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Commission will be on Wednesday, *September 23, 2009*, 7 PM at the Town Offices.

APPENDIX: INFORMATION ITEMS

Although not discussed, the following two items on the agenda are listed here, as their inclusion was to get them into the minutes for future reference.

10. **High School Track Area**

On July 22, 2009 the Jaffrey-Rindge Cooperative School District submitted its Permit by Notification application to DES to replace the two damaged culverts along the stream exiting the small pond behind the tennis courts. JOF reviewed the application and signed it on behalf of the Commission on July 20, 2009.

11. **Greene Family Property**

Members of the Greene family met at the Manse on August 3, 2009 to consider applying to USDA's *Wetlands Reserve Program*. Sue J. Hoey, Technical Easement Specialist with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service in Durham, was the featured invitee. Also in attendance were JOF and Anne McBride of the Monadnock Conservancy.

Under the Wetlands Reserve Program, USDA may assume a permanent easement on properties where wetlands exist or can be restored. When negotiated to agreement, USDA pays the cost of everything involved in the easement process, including purchase of the easement and all transaction costs.

The Greene family is keen on pursuing this option for much of their 150 +/- acres west of Gilmore Pond Road. They submitted their application to USDA by the August 7 deadline for immediate ranking. If and when an easement is negotiated, USDA will breach the dam at the south end of Laban Ainsworth Pond, restoring the surrounding land to the wetlands that existed before the dam was built in the early 1960s.

The family is considering other options for their land as well, including sale of three potential house sites along its periphery. Other options for the dam are also being considered.

Respectfully submitted,

John O. Field