

DRAFT MINUTES

**NEW DURHAM LAND CONSERVATION
COMMISSION**

JANUARY 27, 2008

Selectman Ron Gehl called the meeting to order at 7:12 PM.

Members Present: Ron Gehl (Selectmen's Representative), Bill Malay, Dennis Gagne

Others Present: Sheila Quigley, April Whittaker, Diane Thayer, Anne Zamzow, Fred Quimby, Cynthia Quimby, Don Holm, Charlie Berube, Dennis Thorell, Charlie Bridges, Habitat/Wildlife Diversity Programs Administrator; Larry McKinley, Susan Raslavicus, Paul Raslavicus, Gwynne Oban, Jonathan Danch, Bernard Loughlin, anneleen Loughlin, Greg Poston, Victor Piekarski, Gloria Switalski

Mr. Gehl said the purpose of the meeting was to update citizens regarding the status of the Birch Ridge Conservation Project, and hear from citizens about how they saw the project. He gave an introduction to the Land Conservation Commission. The Board of Selectmen established it in 2006 for the purpose of working with landowners that want to protect their land from development, and making funding recommendations to the BOS regarding the expenditure of certain conservation funds.

He introduced Mike Spelz of the Society for Protection of New Hampshire Forests. Mr. Spelz gave an overview of the history of the Birch Ridge Conservation Project. He said the Forest Society submitted applications on behalf of the project to the KELP program and the LCHIP program. Birch Ridge received the top rating of projects by the New Hampshire Review group, but it was downgraded by federal reviewers for not being within a couple of miles of the actual seacoast.

The Society also submitted the project to the state LCHIP program but funding for the current round of projects was just pulled because of the state's fiscal crisis.

Mike Spelz said the project was a strong candidate for funding from the federal Forest Legacy program, but it would take 4 years of standing in line to get funding there. He mentioned other private funding sources as well.

Mr. Spelz emphasized that the federal, state and private funding sources always wanted to see evidence of local commitment to a project. The \$600,000 plus pledge by individuals is great. He said state and federal funders will want to see money from the Town itself and he encouraged those present to seek approval for a bond at the 2009 Town Meeting, or at least a promise to bring a bond to the voters in 2010.

Ron Gehl opened the meeting for public comment. Most people present indicated they would vote for a bond and indicated that they knew many people would be against a bond at this particular time because of the state of the economy.

Mr. Gehl summarized the Cost of Community Services Report. It shows that the cost of a conservation bond to help buy the property would be high during the first few years, but as the development is built out the cost of extra services to residents of the subdivision would grow faster while the bonding costs would be lowering. The study says that about the 12th year the savings in the cost of town services would exceed the bond cost.

Charlie Bridges, Habitat/Wildlife Diversity Programs Administrator with the Department of Fish and Game said that his department would be able to contribute \$100 – 200,000 toward the purchase of the land. One resident of South Shore Drive suggested that he would be interested in buying some land to attach to his lot. He felt many of his neighbors would also be interested and that could cover part of the cost of buying the land.

Mr. Gehl asked Town Administrator April Whittaker to report on the negative reactions to the plan that she had heard, and her own concerns. She said many residents would not see it as a benefit unless there was a silvaculture plan that could generate timber revenues for the Town. She added that many voters are not able to see the long term cost benefits. They think they will be dead or moved by the time the paybacks outweigh the costs.

Bill Malay said there is about \$300,000 in the Conservation Fund, and some of that money could be used.

Those present agreed that this is not a good year to ask the voters for extra money; and leaned toward introducing a resolution to Town Meeting to promise funding next year.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

David Allen
Land Use Administrative Assistant