

## **Conservation Commission Public Meeting Minutes, August 24, 2016**

Present: Allison Knab, Bill McCarthy, Bob Keating, Pat Elwell, Donna Jensen, Tim Copeland, Brad Jones, Joe Lovejoy. Also, Town Administrator Paul Deschaine

### **Public Session**

The public session was called to order at 7:08pm.

### **Mailbox, August 10 minutes**

Lovejoy moved and McCarthy seconded the motion to accept the August 10 minutes as written. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Mailbox, DES Letter regarding 7a Raeder Drive**

There was an inquiry to Mark Morong regarding a file review of the triplex residence on Raeder Drive. It was determined that the property had no septic plan on file for the actual built structure—a three unit condo building.

### **Mailbox, RCCD Monitoring for RCCD-Held Easements**

Monitoring reports were received from RCCD.

- 14.18 acres monitored: Jen Gunn property open space on Charles Drive. Old farm equipment found abandoned in open space.
- 8.836 acres monitored: Smith property on Spring Hill Road in Greenland (part of parcel in Stratham).

### **PREP's Eel Grass Distribution Report for 2014 Monitoring**

A copy of the eel grass report was received; the report had been provided electronically earlier in the month. <http://scholars.unh.edu/prep/352/>

### **Municipal Updates**

Knab noted that she contacted the RCCD regarding two week turn around for RCCD monitoring reports. That timeline is possible.

Deschaine provided municipal updates.

The Select Board chose not to take action making recommendations for conservation of water, despite the Conservation Commissions suggestion that the board do on August 10.

Austin and Deschaine attended the Winnicut River Watershed Restoration and Management Plan kick off meeting. The watershed is found 35% in N. Hampton, 24% in Stratham (near the Golf Club of NE and Industrial Park), 30% in Greenland, with the remaining portions found in several other towns. Much of N. Hampton's portion of the watershed is stagnant water in swampy areas.

The watershed health is being evaluated in concentrations of Phosphorus and Nitrogen, as well as percent dissolved Oxygen. Fish from the Winnicut have high levels of Mercury. The N. Hampton swamp water fails these quality measures.

Meeting minute updates for June 8. Deschaine identified that he was not in attendance at that meeting although the meeting minutes identified him as so. Elwell moved and Lovejoy seconded a motion to correct the previously approved meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Discussion of the Stratham Hill Park/Forest Management Plan**

Commissioners reviewed the Stratham Hill Park/Forest Management Plan, which had been distributed by email in June 2016. Commissioner comments will be provided to the Forest Management Plan ad hoc committee that was formed back in 2014, although the committee has not met in recent months. Knab is the Conservation Commission representative on the committee.

Title page: Jensen noted that the plan's title should reflect the name of the forest: Gordon Barker Town Forest.

Jensen noted for posterity it would be wise to identify the committee (and member names) that drove the plan, including the Town staff who served. (The report title page indicates the Forestry Committee but this is inaccurate, the Town has no such committee at this time.)

Introduction section: It was noted that the Stratham Hill Park and Gordon Barker Town forests are two different parcels with very different histories, purposes, and governance. This information should preface the entire report, and it appears to be missing from the introduction. Differentiation of parcel purposes might, in some instances, require separate recommendations.

Management Concerns section: Elwell noted that there is no appropriate discussion of public safety at the park and forest. Such a safety discussion might be related to:

- Access of emergency vehicles for events in the forest and park such as the Gordon Barker No Brakes bicycle race and the Stratham Fair
- Tree cutting that is currently necessary to optimize dispatch public safety transmissions of the Rockingham County Sherriff Department from the Stratham Hill antenna

Management Concerns section: Regarding maintaining the viewshed from the top of Stratham Hill, this is a questionable goal generally, and the east/south east viewshed is unnecessary or inappropriate.

Management Concerns section: There was considerable discussion regarding the plans recommendations and discussion of the trail expansion. The Commission wondered if it was appropriate to recommend increase in the trail system given the already high density of trails, a fact that is noted in the document. Many, but not all commissioners, do not want trail expansion, as the forest is already visually negatively impacted by the trails. The plan identified trail expansion as a low priority.

However, the management plan recommendation for any trail expansion could be interpreted as contraindicated, when juxtaposed to the problem of invasive species at the park. Disturbing the forest to expand the view (assigned a high priority) or increase trails (assigned a low priority) will provide an opportunity for more invasive species to take hold (invasive management assigned a high priority).

Management Concerns section: The plan should include some recommendations for invasive species remediation, which can be found in both the park and the forest. The Town's Highway Department and Park Forester have worked to remove some invasive species. However, the plan should make recommendations for possible funding or processes to continue with invasive species control, a high priority in the plan.

Management Concerns section: The Conservation Commission is not in favor of Atlantic White Cedar Swamp educational opportunities. This text might be stricken from the plan.

Forest Types section: There is no text related to location and management of the Atlantic White Cedar Swamp. Of particular interest was a recommendation for a "no disturb" buffer for this rare natural community and valuable wetland.

A number of comments from a prior meeting were distributed for reference during the plan discussion:

- McCarthy noted that the Atlantic White Cedar swamp was identified in the plan maps but there was no management plan recommendations for this rare natural community, such as a suggested buffer for the wetland. He further stated that the plan should include a definitive wetland buffer recommendation for the Atlantic White Cedar swamp beyond the town's general wetland buffer.
- McCarthy also noticed that one plan map indicated a board walk in the Atlantic White Cedar community, which presumably had been proposed and seemed very inappropriate. Jensen noted that the position of the park/forest management plan committee (per committee member Knab) was to steer clear of the swamp to minimize any possible negative impacts to the wetland.
- McCarthy noted the plan stated that the back field should be mowed every autumn and activity on the field limited (dog walking, etc); however, both of the fields are used for parking during the fair in July and the suggestion seemed incongruent with the town's need for the property.
- Elwell would have liked to see more details in general.

#### **Stratham 300th Anniversary Parade, Sunday September 25**

Elwell moved and Copeland seconded the motion that the parade float banner should read, "Conserving Today for Stratham's Tomorrow". The motion passed.

Knab will order a banner appropriate for display during the parade; the money to do so had already been approved during last year's budget meeting. Lovejoy's 7 foot X 8 foot trailer will be used as the parade float.

Deschaine passed out the parade float application form.

#### **Adjournment**

Copeland moved and Keating seconded a motion to adjourn at 8:45 pm. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday September 14, 7:00pm at the Stratham Municipal Center.

Respectfully submitted, Donna Jensen, Secretary