



Town of Merrimack, New Hampshire

Community Development Department

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Planning - Zoning - Economic Development - Conservation

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MERRIMACK CONSERVATION COMMISSION MONDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2023 MEETING MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER -

A Meeting of the Conservation Commission was called to order on Monday February 13, 2023 at 6:30 pm in the Matthew Thornton Room.

Steve Perkins, Chair, presided:

Members of the Commission Present:

Michael Boisvert, Vice-Chair
Andy Hunter – Town Councilor
Ellen Kolb
Michael Drouin, Alternate Member
Gage Perry, (arrived at 6:45pm)
David Trippett, Alternate Member

Members of the Commission Absent:

Cindy Glenn
Gina Rosati, Alternate Member
Eric Starr

Also Participating:

Andrew Duane, 10 Dwyer Street, Wildcat Falls Subcommittee Member

Chair Perkins designated Commissioner Trippett to sit in as a voting member for Commissioner Glenn and Commissioner Drouin to sit in for Commissioner Starr.

PUBLIC HEARINGS - None

NEW BUSINESS –

- Discussion about Wildcat Falls signage funding – *Submitted by Mike Boisvert and Andrew Duane*

As proposed by Vice-Chair Boisvert and Mr. Duane, four signs, to be paid for by the Commission need to be made for the parking lot at Wildcat Falls. Two signs would say “no parking anytime,” to be placed on the left side of parking area (as seen from the Wildcat Falls entrance); that area directly abuts a wetland. There was previously a single no parking no sign, but it disappeared at some point. The Wildcat Falls subcommittee would like the Town to install the four new signs to be placed along a stretch of about 150 feet on the side of the parking lot. The remaining two signs would say “no parking between signs.”

Mr. Duane stated the total cost was just under \$170.00 and this price covers the signs, posts, and installation. Vice-Chair Boisvert said he thinks the Town will do the work, they just wanted the Commission to pay for the materials. Vice-Chair Boisvert stated the pricing he got was from about 4 weeks ago and that it would be helpful to put a cushion in place incase the prices have risen since then.

Vice-Chair Boisvert asked about some parking lot expansion examples provided by Mr. Duane. Mr. Duane said yes, he would not discuss it since it was not on the agenda. He continued that in the near future the Commission will have to make decisions about long term parking options at Wildcat Falls; parking overflows onto neighboring streets on a regular basis, though not to the extent we saw during COVID. He previously presented a few options though only one of them is reasonable considering what is going on. One of the options would involve a pedestrian bridge and be quite expensive, however it would provide endless parking options so it would be worth researching. Chair Perkins and Vice-Chair Boisvert pointed out this issue has been a point of contention in the past and that a pedestrian bridge was unlikely to happen in the near future.

Mr. Duane spoke of another potential option to use the High School’s parking lot during the summer when the property experiences peak traffic. This idea had been turned down due to liability concerns. Commissioner Perry said it would be hard to enforce parking only during the summer. Mr. Duane said at some point this issue would need to be discussed. He provided a few copies of potential plan, but noted these options were short term fixes which would only add a small number of extra parking spaces, one of which would be where the new proposed parking signs would be placed.

Commissioner Perry questioned what the status of the Merrill’s Marauders foot Bridge was. Chair Perkins said they spoke about it at their annual presentation to Town Council. The former Department of Public Works (DPW) director had added it to a short list of projects to be considered should grant monies be made available. The money needed was substantial because he believes it was determined that a new bridge would need to be constructed. Mr. Duane said he assumes it would be a similar cost for a pedestrian bridge providing access from the nearby ball fields to Wildcat Falls. Chair Perkins stated the cost would probably be more because work on the

bank would need to be done. The Merrill's Marauders Bridge already has two abutment footprints so it would require less work.

Mr. Duane said drainage swales lined with riprap are needed for erosion control on the Falls Loop Trail. He has obtained a quote from Solano Landscaping of Amherst for \$158.00 for two cubic yards of riprap including delivery. DPW would need to construct the swales. Currently, the erosion problem is addressed by re-grading, which is good for only a season at a time. Commissioner Perry suggested checking with DPW to see if they have riprap available. A vote on this can wait until the next Commission meeting. Mr. Duane suggested not digging to place riprap until the riprap is ready because digging would make the trail somewhat hazardous.

Discussion briefly touched on why parking issues had been non-enforceable in the past, possibly due to there not being any ordinance the issue fit under. Mr. Duane responded he thinks there was an attempt to limit the parking to Merrimack residents only but without specific signage there was not anyway to enforce this. There were also questions about whether or not resident only parking could even be enforced.

Mr. Duane reported that the main sign at the entrance to Wildcat Falls was recently removed by an unknown party. He noted it is a very large sign weight around 200 pounds so it is unlikely it was randomly taken. Councilor Hunter suggested letting the Town Manager know about this so that he can check with DPW to see if the department removed it for any reason, and if not, the Town Manager can report the loss to the Police Department so they can get involved if needed. Vice-Chair Boisvert agreed to contact the Town Manager.

Motion by Vice-Chair Boisvert to spend an amount not to exceed \$190.00 from Fund 53 to pay for four signs (two "no parking anytime" and two "no parking between signs") and four signposts.

Motion Seconded by Commissioner Drouin

Motion Carried

7-0-0

- MCC Meeting Submission schedule update – *Submitted by Mike Boisvert*
Commissioners received the revised schedule in tonight's packets. This submission schedule was never revised when the Commission moved their meetings from the first & third Mondays of the month to the second & fourth Mondays last year. No meeting dates are being changed; the revision is to dates for submittal and public hearing notice deadlines. Commissioners adopted the revised schedule without debate. Chair Perkins to ask the Community Development Department to update their webpage to reflect when the MCC meets.
- Participation in the 2023 Winter Carnival – *Submitted by Mike Boisvert*

The Carnival will take place Saturday, February 25, from noon to 3 p.m. at Wasserman Park. Chair Perkins asked if anyone would like to staff a table to represent the Commission at the event; Commissioner Drouin volunteered to do so. Chair Perkins will register for the table by Friday's deadline (Feb. 17); Commissioner Drouin will use MCC materials for display and distribution; Commissioner Kolb asked if the Commission should post information about the event on social media to promote the Commission's presence at the event. Chair Perkins said yes, that would be a good idea. He will register the Commission and provide the booth number to anyone participating in the event.

- George May from the Lower Merrimack River Advisory Committee to speak about open positions on the committee

George May of the Lower Merrimack River Advisory Committee was not present for the agenda item "speak about open positions on the committee." Councilor Hunter said that he know from Mr. May that there are vacancies for both LMRAC and the Souhegan River Watershed Council's summer water testing program. Interested parties can contact the Town Manager. Commissioner Kolb, recently named to LMRAC, briefly described the advisory committee's draft report on the river, which will be available to the public when it's adopted. She is also a water testing volunteer. She described that program as a biweekly event, June through August, where volunteers take water samples from designated spots along the Souhegan and Merrimack Rivers for E. Coli and dissolved oxygen testing. She said volunteers are always welcome.

OTHER BUSINESS –

- 2023 Seedling order update – *Submitted by Mike Boisvert*

Commissioner Perry reported that unfortunately it looks like MCC will not be able to have a seedling giveaway this spring. The state nursery is sold out of many varieties, and it will return the town's check.

- Trail Signs, review need and raw materials purchase – *Submitted by Mike Boisvert*

Vice-Chair Boisvert has compiled a list of signs requested by the subcommittees. He has a quote for material in the amount of \$126.00 (cedar lumber and deck screws) from Lowe's for seven cedar boards, to be made by volunteer Scott Simpson. Vice-Chair Boisvert stated this quote was from a few weeks ago, so it may be helpful to have a buffer incase prices have increased since.

Motion by Vice-Chair Boisvert to spend an amount not to exceed \$150.00 for material for seven signs, out of Fund 53.

Motion Seconded by Commissioner Drouin
Motion Carried
7-0-0.

Chair Perkins pointed out correspondence between the Town and the NH Department of Transportation (copies provided to the Commission). NHDOT as part of its Everett Turnpike widening project has proposed a mitigation payment to the Town for land affected by the project; the Town at MCC's request asked DOT if a land swap could be done instead, involving the State property between Wildcat Falls and the Everett Turnpike. NHDOT replied that the State property might be needed for a future State project and so a swap is not possible at this time.

Commissioner Perry asked if the Town has been asked about removal of downed trees from Conservation Commission trails. Vice-Chair Boisvert replied that he had not yet asked, wanting to wait until recent storm damage could be evaluated. He will call the Town tomorrow. He asked that if any Commissioners noticed additional downed trees to email him so he can add them to his running list.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES –

Motion by Commissioner Kolb to approve the December 12, 2022 Conservation Commission minutes without amendment.

Motion Seconded by Councilor Hunter
Motion Carried
6-0-1
Abstained: Commissioner Drouin

ADJOURNMENT –

Motion to Adjourn by Commissioner Perry
Motion Seconded by Councilor Hunter
Motion Carried
7-0-0

The February 13, 2023 meeting of the Conservation Commission was adjourned at 7:05pm.