



Town of Merrimack, New Hampshire

Community Development Department

6 Baboosic Lake Road

Town Hall - Lower level - East Wing

Planning - Zoning - Economic Development - Conservation

603 424-3531

Fax 603 424-1408

www.merrimacknh.gov

MERRIMACK CONSERVATION COMMISSION

MONDAY, JULY 25, 2022

MEETING MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER -

A meeting of the Merrimack Conservation Commission was called to order on Monday, July 25, 2022 at 6:30pm in the Matthew Thornton room.

Steve Perkins, Chair, presided:

Members of the Commission Present:

Mike Boisvert
Michael Drouin, Alternate Member
Cynthia Glenn
Gage Perry
Eric Starr
David Trippett, Alternate Member

Members of the Commission Absent:

Ellen Kolb
Gina Rosati, Alternate Member
Andy Hunter

Also Participating:

Jacqueline Robideaux, 12 Autumn Lane, Wildlife Rehabilitator at Millstone Wildlife Center

Chair Perkins designated Commissioner Trippett to sit in for Commissioner Kolb.

PUBLIC HEARINGS – None

NEW BUSINESS –

- Releasing wildlife onto MCC Properties
Mrs. Robideaux spoke about the possibility of releasing wildlife onto MCC properties. She explained that each fall the Millstone Wildlife Center has many animals that need to be released back into the wild. These animals are typically found in locations they cannot be released back to (i.e. roadsides, neighborhoods). The hope is to release the animals into locations that can provide proper habitat and will be suitable for their survival. She questioned if the Commission would be open to allowing wildlife to be released onto

Conservation land and noted that they are currently looking to release an Otter next spring.

Vice-Chair Boisvert stated that if animals were placed far enough into the property, away from neighborhoods and trailheads, then properties like Grater Woods and HHNP may be suitable for release. Mrs. Roubideaux mentioned that the animals are used to some human contact, so she would not want to release them in a neighborhood. They would need to be released a little further away.

Vice-Chair Boisvert noted they would probably want to avoid releasing wildlife onto school property, Commissioner Perry agreed. Commissioner Perry questioned how the wildlife rehabilitators know if the area they release the animal into can sustain the wildlife. Mrs. Robideaux remarked that she hoped to get this information from the Conservation Commission.

She noted that Grater Woods has a large area of habitat. Commissioner Perry mentioned a biodiversity study had been completed within the last 10 years at Grater Woods. Mrs. Robideaux added, it is hard to say without knowing the number of animals at the property, but it looks to be a sustainable habitat as long as there is a food and water source. She added that they have done successful releases in the past at Beaver Brook in Hollis and noted that Millstone Wildlife Center monitors with trail cams after releases to make sure things are going smoothly.

Commissioner Perry questioned how many animals they would be looking to release. Mrs. Robideaux responded that they typically try to release the animals in small family groups. Commissioner Perry noted he couldn't think of any reason this would create a liability for the Town since the animals already can go to these areas on their own. The conversation touched on Otters and their release as well as Bobcats in the area.

Vice-Chair Boisvert asked if the Commission wanted to receive notification if or when wildlife releases were made. Chair Perkins questioned what other Towns do and whether or not there was any particular reason they should be notified when releases take place. Commissioner Perry felt it would be good if the Commission was notified as the wildlife rehabilitators would be going to the property with cages, and residents may have concerns about animal trapping.

Commissioner Perry questioned if there are roaming space requirements for different animals. Mrs. Robideaux mentioned Raccoons typically need anywhere from 1-5 miles, Skunks have small territories, and Bobcats take a much larger space. She noted that they will be releasing their Bobcat where it was found.

Commissioner Perry remarked he was not sure if they should advertise releases. The goal would be to release the animals so they can reintegrate in nature away from humans. Mrs. Robideaux remarked that when they do release, they don't typically post the location, unless it is requested for public educational reasons. She noted Millstone Wildlife Center

works hard to provide education to the public on why animal releases need to happen and why they need to return to their natural habitat. Commissioner Perry noted some residents also own large tracts of land, the Commission could reach out and see if they would be willing to support release efforts in some way.

Commissioner Starr commented he has been doing informal ecological surveys of Conservation properties in Town. He noted there are not currently population issues with Skunks, Otters, or Raccoons. If the animals were released evenly throughout the properties, there should not be any issues. The discussion continued on to other possible release locations in Town including Gilmore Hill and Wasserman Conservation Area.

There was a consensus among the Commission to allow the release of wildlife on Conservation Commission properties. Chair Perkins will notify the Town Manager that the discussion took place and to ensure there are not any regulations prohibiting this that they are unaware of. Commissioner Glenn noted that in the past, the Commission has given Granite State Dog Recovery permission to trap a missing dog. Other than that, trapping to kill any animal would need to be approved by the Commission. There should not be any trapping happening as no one has asked permission to trap on Conservation properties.

Commissioner Perry commented that there had been previous trapping for a Beaver issue, but it was done by professionals. Mrs. Robideaux questioned if there was a Beaver relocation program. Commissioner Perry stated that Conservation properties were currently maxed out in regards to Beaver population. He mentioned that Beaver relocation was explored with a few local environmental groups as well as NH Fish & Game. The chances of relocation being successful are very low, unless they travel up north.

- Right to Know Law Tutorial

Chair Perkins noted that the video had a lot of great information that was helpful including topics such as quorum, agendas, minutes etc. Though it is long, it is worth a watch.

OTHER BUSINESS –

- Eversource Utility work at HHNP

Chair Perkins stated that Eversource is wrapping up the most significant portion of the projects current phase in the next few weeks. Commissioner Glenn mentioned she thinks they still have other work to complete after completion of the current phase, so the project will most likely be completed in mid-August. Chair Perkins to confirm whether or not this information was shared with the HHNP Subcommittee.

- Subcommittee Appointments

Chair Perkins gave background on the item, stating that terms previously expired in July. This was changed last year so that terms expire the last day of June. There were some

changes to procedure going forward. Discussion covered which votes needed to take place. Commissioner Perry stated the subcommittee by-laws may need to be updated to reflect voting members and term length.

Grater Woods Subcommittee –

Motion by Chair Perkins to reappoint Gage Perry through June 30, 2023, Steve Marble through June 30, 2024 and Jeffrey LeCours through June 30, 2025.

Second by Commissioner Perry

Motion Carried

6-0-0

Horse Hill Nature Preserve Subcommittee –

Motion by Chair Perkins to approve a new term for Ellen Kolb through June 30, 2023.

Second by Commissioner Trippett

Motion Carried

6-0-0

Sklar Subcommittee –

Motion by Chair Perkins to appoint Katie Little term expiring June 30, 2025 and Karen Maillet expiring June 30, 2023, and Kareen Dunn through June 30, 2024 as full members to the Sklar subcommittee.

Second by Commissioner Trippett

Motion Carried

6-0-0

Motion by Chair Perkins to appoint Anita Creager from full member to alternate member through June 30, 2024, Alison Mitchell as an alternate through June 30, 2023, and Derek Trippett as an alternate through June 30, 2023.

Second by Commissioner Trippett

Motion Carried

6-0-0

Motion by Chair Perkins to extend the terms of Michael Drouin through June 30, 2023 and Mark Twardoski through June 30, 2025.

Second by Commissioner Trippett

Motion Carried

6-0-0

Wildcat Falls

Motion by Chair Perkins to extend the terms of Mike Boisvert through June 30, 2023, Liz Petrides through June 30, 2024, Karen LaBonte through June 30, 2025 and Andrew Duane through June 30, 2025.

Second by Commissioner Trippett

Motion Carried

6-0-0

- Subcommittee Updates

Chair Perkins noted that subcommittee updates don't need to be expansive. If something important is happening, such as misuse of land, that can be discussed, but the purpose is mostly to let the Commission know if a Subcommittee needs more support from the Conservation Commission.

Sklar - Commissioner Drouin stated that E.coli levels at the Sklar boat launch are currently very high. He questioned if they should put a sign to notify individuals at the property. Commissioner Perry noted these numbers are publicly reported. Commissioner Glenn added that a sign in the kiosk with the website to visit for updates may be a good option. The Merrimack River Watershed Council is interested in working with the Sklar Subcommittee to create an invasive plant management plan to be presented to the Conservation Commission.

Additionally, the subcommittee would like to present the property master plan to the Commission in August. Chair Perkins asked if the plan will include the tree survey to which Commissioner Drouin responded that it would only be of the picnic area. Commissioner Trippett noted it would be good to have some feedback before submitting the final plan for approval. Commissioner Perry noted other members who have done the work before could assist with this.

Commissioner Drouin noted the Subcommittee was not planning on having to make a different parking area. He questioned if the new parking area had to be presented to the Commission or Town Council since parking would be on Town owned land. Commissioner Perry commented it would need to be Town Council since its Town owned land. He added that the Conservation Commission should be the ones to present the plan to Town Council. Before presenting the plan they will need to approve it themselves and have it reviewed by the Department of Public Works and Town Manager. Discussion briefly touched on possible shoreland requirements since the parking lot will be within 250 feet of the River.

Grater Woods – A work day took place recently. Balusters were replaced on the overlook deck and a date will be picked to construct a new bridge on the education loop trail. An additional workday will be scheduled soon. Currently, the overlook is looking at a field because the pond is gone, however there is a lot of Beaver activity and a successional pond has started to come back. The subcommittee is still waiting to hear back from Lowe's for the new roof tiles purchased to repair the outdoor classroom roof.

- Discussion regarding other items of concern

Chair Perkins noted there was previously a section in the agenda listed as a catch all for Commissioner Comments. He noted that the new wording may lead to confusion and lead individuals to bring up topics not more clearly listed on the agenda.

Commissioner Drouin noted the hike club postponed the last scheduled hike due to extreme heat. The hike is reschedule for July 31, 2022.

Commissioner Glenn watched the last meeting and noted as far as deeds, there are different kinds depending on who purchase the land. She reference HHNP and Sklar properties as examples. HHNP was originally purchased by the Town while Sklar was purchased by the Commission. The deed restrictions for Conservation land typically have caveats listed as the purpose of their purchase is to protect the land. Land purchased by the Town, but meant to be managed by the Conservation Commission, would have different language in the deed. Discussion touched on Sklar having no parking which may make it difficult for residents to use.

Commissioner Perry noted that Sklar had specific covenants on the deed before the Commission purchased it. It is easy to make deeds more restrictive, however to remove restrictions, they would need to go to court. Commissioner Trippett noted that in the future it would be good to consider the draw to a specific property before purchasing it. He noted that it may be helpful to choose parcels that allow parking so they are more accessible for public use.

Commissioner Glenn noted traditionally Conservation land has been purchased for protection of the land, not necessarily for public access to the land. She noted tax payers are interested in clean air and water.

Chair Perkins shared he recently received an email from someone looking to complete a Girl Scout project. The land the individual is looking at is private property. Chair Perkins was working on connecting her with the HHNP subcommittee as he knew of some projects the subcommittee has interest in receiving help with. The email seemed to indicate that the individual would be interested in learning about the process of trail making. Chair Perkins encouraged the individual to look into HHNP since this land would be more accessible than private property.

PRESENTATION OF THE MINUTES –

Motion by Commissioner Glenn to approve the July 11, 2022 Conservation Commission meeting minutes with the following changes:

Page 1, Add Gina Rosati to the Members of the Commission Absent

Page 2, Line 70; change “sire” to “site”

Page 3, Line 125; change “RESIVED” to “REVISED”

Page 4, Line 141; change “RESONCIDER” to “RECONSIDER”

Page 4, Line 165; delete “(no first name mentioned)”

Merrimack Conservation Commission Minutes

July 25, 2022

Page 7 of 7

Page 5, Line 190; add “for” after spring

Page 5, Line 212; add “thing” after right

Page 5, Line 214; add “that” after land

Page 6, Line 233; change “RESIVED” to “REVISED”

Page 6, Lines 259 & 260; change “Mr. Gagnon” to “Mr. Twardoski”

Page 7, Line 280 change; “has,” to “years,”

Page 7, Line 298; delete “to” from the end of the sentence

Page 7, Line 299; delete “the” at the beginning of the sentence

Page 8, Line 343; change “DRAFTED” to “AMENDED” and list these amendments:

Article XI, Section A: add “Statutory Advisory Business” between b and c and add

“Commissioner Comments” between f and g

Page 9, Line 352; change “SERVICE” to “SERVE”

Page 9, Line 387; add “it” before would pose

Page 10, Line 400; delete “was”

Page 10, Line 433/434 & 436; change “Field Farms” to “Fields Farm”

Motion Seconded by Vice-Chair Boisvert

Motion Carried

6-0-0

ADJOURNMENT -

Motion by Commissioner Perry to Adjourn

Motion Seconded by Vice-Chair Boisvert

Motion Carried

6-0-0

The July 25, 2022 meeting of the Merrimack Conservation Commission was adjourned at 7:37pm.

Submitted by Stefanie Brinn