



# Town of Merrimack, New Hampshire

Community Development Department

6 Baboosic Lake Road

Town Hall - Lower level - East Wing

Planning - Zoning - Economic Development - Conservation

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## MERRIMACK CONSERVATION COMMISSION

MARCH 7, 2022

### MEETING MINUTES

A meeting of the Merrimack Conservation Commission was held on Monday, March 7, 2022, at 6:30 p.m. in the Merrimack Memorial Conference Room.

Steven Perkins, Chair, presided:

Members of the Commission Present:

Michael Boisvert, Vice Chair  
Gina Rosati, Secretary  
Cynthia Glenn  
Gage Perry  
Eric Starr  
Michael Drouin, Alternate Member  
Ellen Kolb, Alternate Member  
David Trippett, Alternate Member  
Councilor Andy Hunter

Members of the Commission Absent:

Also Participating:

Savannah Vallier, 35 Tinker Road

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**PUBLIC COMMENT** – Savannah Vallier spoke of an infestation of burning bush at the HHNP property. She stated it was around several acres in size and appears to have been unmanaged for some time. Ms. Vallier expressed interest in being involved in any efforts to manage this invasive plant.

A discussion followed regarding best methods to manage invasive plant species on Commission properties, connecting with the UNH Cooperative, and the best time of year to manage or dispose of invasive plants.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS** - None

**APPOINTMENTS** –

Kirk Ware -Vote to approve Kirk's appointment to the HHNP subcommittee (Full member)

**MOTION BY COMMISSIONER STARR TO APPOINT KIRK WARE AS A FULL MEMBER OF THE HORSE HILL NATURE PRESERVE SUB-COMMITTEE FOR A**

**TERM TO EXPIRE ON JULY 31, 2025.**

**MOTION SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER PERRY**

**MOTION CARRIED 7-0-0**

**STATUTORY/ADVISORY BUSINESS** – None

**NEW BUSINESS** –

-Proposal to move Conservation Commission meeting dates (to 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays of the week) and meeting location (Matthew Thornton room)

Chair Perkins spoke of a proposal to move the Conservation Commission meeting location to the Matthew Thornton Room at Town Hall. He noted that the Community Development Department had asked the Commission to consider this proposal. He noted some compelling reasons to switch meeting locations including, better audio/visual equipment, and a larger room. If this change is approved, there would not be any scheduling conflicts until fall when there are a few holidays that the Town Hall closes to observe.

Commissioner Perry commented that a few subcommittees may have to change their meeting schedule in order to avoid conflict(s) with the proposed change. Commissioner Glenn stated that she personally felt the Memorial Room is more conducive to Conservation Commission meetings as the circular desk shape makes it easier for group communication. She also felt it may be more difficult to notice if members don't have the microphone on in the Matthew Thornton room.

Councilor Hunter remarked that there is a window at the back of the Matthew Thornton room, if a Commission member forgets to turn on their microphone a member of the audio/visual team can easily wave to anyone in the group as a reminder to turn on their microphone. He also noted that the current schedule and location requires the audio/visual team to cover equipment, such as microphone and cameras, for multiple meetings and rooms at the same time. Moving Conservation meetings to the Matthew Thornton would make it easier for their team to manage equipment needs.

Chair Perkins suggested adjusting the schedule days and location in May. He continued that if this change hurt the group's collaborative value, they could revert back to the original schedule. He remarked that there is a value in having a space where members of the public are able to present to the Conservation Commission.

The discussion continued with members giving suggestions on meeting frequency and pointing out holidays that may conflict with the new schedule. Discussion resulted in Chair Perkins stating that he would update the Conservation Commission schedule with new proposed meeting dates/location to begin in May. The Commission will discuss the topic again at the April 4, 2022 meeting.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **-22<sup>nd</sup> Annual seedling giveaway on Saturday May 7, 2022**

Commissioner Perry stated seedlings got ordered later than expected. He outlined that when a Commission member is assigned a project, it is important that the project gets taken care of in an orderly fashion to avoid unnecessary project delays. When time bound projects, such as the seedling giveaway, are delayed it can result in the Commission missing out.

Chair Perkins also suggested any members who have never been to the seedling giveaway attend in the future. It is the Conservation Commission's busiest event.

### **-Request for Flying Eagles to mark trees they plan to cut and to send a reminder to the Flying Eagles that they are not approved to cut on Sklar Land (South side of the road)**

Vice-Chair Boisvert stated that some of the subcommittees, especially Sklar have concerns regarding tree cutting by the Flying Eagles. He noted that he understands the property is owned by the Town, so the subcommittee cannot control the cut, but it would be helpful if the trees to be cut were marked. This would allow the Sklar subcommittee to see what is being cut, how much is being cut, and hopefully encourage less cutting. The other request Vice-Chair Boisvert made was for him or Chair Perkins to contact the Flying Eagles and let them know they cannot cut on the South side of the road, as this land is a part of the Sklar property.

The discussion continued regarding when any tree cutting would take place. Councilor Hunter suggested talking with Town Manager Paul Micali to get a schedule. He mentioned when the group went before the Town Council, there were some insurance requirements the group had to meet before any cutting could take place. Questions arose regarding whether or not a subcontractor would be hired out to complete the cutting. Councilor Hunter responded that the Flying Eagles could complete some of the work themselves, provided that insurance requirements were met, the town be indemnified, and proper approval was granted by the Town.

Commissioner Perry questioned if an intent to cut form had to be filed with the Town and Councilor Hunter responded that he was unsure, but assumed if it was a standard process that the Flying Eagles would be required to file this form. Commissioner Perry also questioned if the long term plans were to drop the trees and leave them, or if logging roads would be made. Commissioner Trippett stated he understood the plan was to slash and drop but not create logging roads. Councilor Hunter confirmed there was no plan for the creation of logging roads.

Councilor Hunter stated that for some of the bigger trees, there were requests to fall the trees over bigger roads to discourage ATV use on the property. Vice-Chair Boisvert and Commissioner Trippett stated this was not helpful and Councilor Hunter reiterated that the trees would be felled this way due to a request. Commissioner Trippett questioned who made this request and Commissioner Drouin responded that he had.

Discussion continued regarding obtaining a copy of the Flying Eagle lease. It appears no exterior work has been done on trees or fence on the property for approximately 30 years and would be helpful for the Conservation Commission to determine the Flying Eagles outdoor maintenance responsibilities.

Chair Perkins to research this information. Councilor Hunter suggested talking to Town Manager Paul Micali regarding these requests. He felt that the Flying Eagles group would be interested in working to cover any requests or answer any questions the Conservation Commission had.

Commissioner Perry noted that the group had been supportive and easy to work with the past. He continued that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) may be helpful, citing an example of an MOU between the school district and Conservation Commission for the Grater Woods property.

#### **-Merrimack Hike Club update**

Commissioner Drouin proposed creating a Merrimack Hike Club subcommittee. He felt this would lead to greater organization in the planning of group hikes on Conservation properties. Vice-Chair Boisvert suggested having different subcommittees host hikes periodically. A brief discussion followed and touch on how subcommittees tried to host hikes in the past, but it didn't work out. The discussion also covered whether or not there is a public need, what the goal of this subcommittee would be, and how hikes would be marketed.

Commissioner Drouin reiterated his suggestion to create a Hike Club subcommittee, and added that the Conservation Commission could take over the Facebook page he had created to communicate Hikes with residents. Commissioner Rosati recapped past conversations the Conservation Commission had stating that most Commission members were not on Facebook and weren't planning to use the site.

Chair Perkins pointed out that the Conservation Commission has its own website, which can be a challenge in itself to keep updated. Commissioner Drouin stated that Litchfield and Hudson each used Facebook pages to share this type of information. Commissioner Rosati stated that this didn't matter as those were different communities.

Commissioner Glenn mentioned that she wasn't sure they had the correct number of volunteers to form a Hike Club subcommittee. Chair Perkins then noted that no one was saying no to a subcommittee, but that there was not anyone volunteering to run the subcommittee.

Commissioner Drouin felt he could run the subcommittee, if it was created. He also shared that because there is not currently a formal subcommittee sponsoring hikes, residents would not be interesting in joining hikes.

Commissioner Rosati stated that to accomplish the proposed subcommittee, the information would need to be organized, accurate, and individuals guiding the hikes would need to be knowledgeable about Conservation properties. In addition, hikes would need to be interesting and valuable to prospective participants.

#### **-MCC Storage**

Commissioner Drouin stated the closet being used for MCC Storage is not organized and is not a proper place to store things. Items that belong to the Conservation Commission should be clearly labeled so things don't go missing. Commissioner Drouin commented that the storage area was inadequate and that items would get stolen.

Commissioner Rosati questioned how items would get stolen when you have to be buzzed into the office and closet areas. Chair Perkins noted that he felt grateful to have this space as it can provide a clear picture on how much storage is actually used. Commissioner Drouin stated he would not keep any valuable tools or items in these areas as there was not enough space and the items would not be secure. Chair Perkins responded that if they outgrew the space, then they could consider other options.

### **-Feedback from 2022 Winter Carnival**

Chair Perkins stated the event was well attended. He was able to collect great feedback on the trail signage at various Conservation Commission properties. Many residents came and were able to learn about properties available for them to use in Town. The Commission agreed the event was very well organized.

### **-MCC Sklar site visit Tuesday March 29<sup>th</sup> at 10:00am**

Chair Perkins shared that as planned, Garret Graaskamp (Coordinator, Statewide Boat Ramp Access Program) and Ray Green (NH Fish & Game Vice-Chair and Commissioner, Hillsborough County) will both be in attendance at the site visit. Chair Perkins will reach out to the Department of Public Works again to make sure they are aware of the site visit. Chair Perkins stated that minutes should still be taken, but he believes the only motion that needs to be made is to adjourn, as it is a site walk and not a formal meeting.

Chair Perkins questioned if Councilor Hunter could think of anyone else who needed to be invited. Councilor Hunter responded that Kyle Fox, the Director of Public Works was a good point person and could share information with others in town that may need to get involved with the project. Vice-Chair Boisvert questioned if Matthew Casparius, Director of Parks & Recreation, needed to be involved. Councilor Hunter responded that this did not fall under Parks & Recreation, so the Commission should be covered by having Kyle Fox in attendance.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

- Subcommittee Updates

**HHNP Subcommittee-** Commissioner Kolb made the subcommittee aware of Kirk Ware's appointment as a full member. At their last meeting, a question came up regarding boundary marking. Several members were concerned about an area that borders Farmer Road and Foster Road. There appears to be a private trail being used or

constructed. The concerns were whether or not the HHNP property lines were marked. Commissioner Kolb questioned what steps the subcommittee should take next.

Commissioner Perry commented, boundary lines are usually determined during the summer. They are marked by using the trees closest to the boundary, and then following the tree line. The goal is that looking forward, the markers on the next tree is visible.

**Sklar Subcommittee-** Commissioner Drouin shared that the creation of the Sklar property plan is going well. The subcommittee will have a draft to present at the March 29 site walk. The subcommittee also confirmed there was a vote about 6 months ago to move some rocks to block off roader vehicles on the property. Additionally, they discussed possible restoration to a historic bridge on the property. They will be holding a work weekend in the near future.

Brief discussion continued about usage of boulders on Sklar property, their placement, where they would come from and the usage of the existing berm on the property. The subcommittee will be in contact with the Department of Public Works regarding this project.

### **PRESENTATION OF THE MINUTES**

Merrimack Conservation Commission. . . . . February 7, 2022

**MOTION BY COMMISSIONER ROSATI TO ACCEPT the CONSERVATION  
COMMISSION MINUTES DATED FEBRUARY 7, 2022  
MOTION SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER GLENN  
MOTION CARRIED 7-0-0**

**PUBLIC COMMENT** - None

### **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

Vice-Chair Boisvert shared they have run out of cedar for trail signs however, he had left over money from the budget so planned to pick up more materials. He continued that the addition of more signs, and markers, has seemed to make residents more comfortable utilizing the trails. However, he noted that if trail markers are placed too close together it can become confusing, especially in the winter where there is not leaf cover.

Commissioner Rosati mentioned mud season would be arriving soon, bears would be waking from hibernation, and birds have started to migrate back to the area. She advised it may be a good idea to put away bird feeders before the bears wake up.

Chair Perkins thanked Commissioner Perry and Vice-Chair Boisvert for installing duck boxes.

Commissioner Drouin stated that a member of the public posted on Facebook regarding erosion at the Wildcat Falls property past the power lines. Commissioner Starr commented that he had pictures of the property from previous years and would be happy to compare the new photos with his.

Commissioner Perry reiterated mud season was coming. He noted that in the past the Conservation Commission spent a lot of time closing trails during mud season, but this strategy was unsuccessful. He asked that the Commissioner remind residents to stay off the trails when they are muddy. He also stated that all duck boxes were up, he is not planning on buying more, unless there are other areas in need.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION BY COMMISSIONER ROSATI TO ADJOURN**

**MOTION SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER PERRY**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**7-0-0**

The March 7, 2022, meeting of the Merrimack Conservation Commission was adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Submitted by Stefanie Brinn