



Town of Merrimack, New Hampshire

Community Development Department

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Planning - Zoning - Economic Development - Conservation

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MERRIMACK CONSERVATION COMMISSION

JANUARY 6, 2014

MEETING MINUTES

A regular meeting of the Merrimack Conservation Commission was held on Monday, January 6, 2014, at 6:35 p.m. in the Matthew Thornton Room.

Chairman Tim Tenhave presided:

Members of the Commission Present: Matt Caron, Vice Chairman
Ron Davies
Thomas Lehman
Gage Perry
Councilor Thomas Mahon
Lauren Kras, Alternate

Members of the Commission Absent: Simon Thomson
Robert Croatti, Alternate

Also in Attendance: Angela Martin

Chairman Tenhave noted Commissioner Thomson was ill and would not be in attendance. He appointed Alternate member Kras to serve as a voting member. Chairman Tenhave informed the Commission and viewing audience the next meeting of the Commission would take place on the fourth Monday of the month; January 27, 2014, and that the only meeting scheduled for the month of February would take place on February 10, 2014.

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

APPOINTMENTS - None

STATUTORY/ADVISORY BUSINESS - None

OLD BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS

1. Horse Hill Nature Preserve Sub-Committee Membership Changes

Commission to discuss a recent resignation and potential appointment of new fulltime and alternate members to the Sub-Committee.

Chairman Tenhave noted Mr. Hamilton has submitted his resignation from the Horse Hill Nature Preserve (HHNP) Sub-Committee. An Alternate member, Amanda Yonkin, has expressed an interest in serving in the capacity of full-time member. Ms. Angela Martin has also expressed a desire to serve. Chairman Tenhave commented on the positive aspect of gaining additional perspectives, and noted membership has been fairly constant. When asked if she has a preference, Ms. Martin stated a desire to be appointed as a full-time member and a willingness to accept an appointment as an Alternate.

Chairman Tenhave questioned the will of the Commission. When asked, he stated Ms. Yonkin was appointed, as an Alternate member, approximately 6 weeks earlier. Having been made aware of an opening for a full-time member, she expressed her interest in serving in that capacity.

Ms. Martin questioned whether there is a limit on the size of the sub-committee, and was informed a limit was set by the definitive plan put in place by the Town Council. Vice Chairman Caron noted the sub-committee generally conducts its business by consensus, which provides for active participation by both full-time and alternate members. Commissioner Lehman asked for clarification and was informed Ms. Yonkin had originally expressed interest in being a full-time member; however, at the time of her appointment, there were no full-time positions available. Commissioner Davies commented as Ms. Yonkin is an existing member and has expressed an interest in a full-time position; in all fairness she should be given first preference. Commissioner Perry stated his agreement. Commissioner Kras stated her opinion whoever is able to be most actively involved should be appointed as a full-time member.

Ms. Martin commented she is not aware that either of them has a background that lends itself to adding more value. She stated her appreciation of the fairness approach. She added she is confident both Ms. Yonkin and she would be equally as happy to serve as either a full-time or alternate member.

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER DAVIES TO APPOINT AMANDA YONKIN AS A FULL-TIME MEMBER AND ANGELA MARTIN AS AN ALTERNATE MEMBER OF THE HORSE HILL NATURE PRESERVE SUB-COMMITTEE
MOTION SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER LEHMAN

ON THE QUESTION

Commissioner Perry questioned whether the intent would be for Ms. Martin to be considered for the next open full-time position. Chairman Tenhave stated moving an alternate member into an open full-time position has been past practice.

Chairman Tenhave noted the Town Council has amended the procedure to allow for alternate members to be appointed to full-time positions without having to go through the formal interview process before the Town Council. Councilor Mahon stated amendments were made as a means of encouraging alternate members to assume full-time positions and to recognize their contributions. However, it is not a guaranteed confirmation.

MOTION CARRIED
7-0-0

Chairman Tenhave informed the Commission of his receipt of a purchase request from the Horse Hill Nature Preserve Sub-Committee for the expenditure of \$150 to create sign posts as well as construct a bench in memory of Harold Watson.

MOTION BY COUNCILOR MAHON THAT THE RULES BE SO FAR SUSPENDED AS TO ALLOW FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF A REQUEST FOR PURCHASE, WHICH WAS INADVERTENTLY OMITTED FROM THE AGENDA

MOTION SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER TENHAVE
MOTION CARRIED
7-0-0

Vice Chairman Caron spoke of a bridge, in the area of the loop trail, which was constructed by an Eagle Scout approximately 7 years ago. The bridge goes over flow that begins in the White Pine Swamp, across the power lines, through the swamp at the bottom of the east slope and then down to the lower pond where it crosses out under the bridge and into the Watson property. The bridge is at the low point. Going up, heading east, there is a nice rise, which is where it is envisioned a bench could be placed allowing users to overlook the beaver pond on the Watson property. Next to the bench would be a plaque with the dedication to Mr. Watson.

The estimated cost for construction of the bench and purchase of a plaque is \$150.00. Chairman Tenhave stated his belief there remains approximately \$630.00 in the Horse Hill Nature Preserve Fund. He noted an accounting would be provided to Commissioners.

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER CARON TO AUTHORIZE THE EXPENDITURE OF ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY DOLLARS (\$150.00) FROM THE HORSE HILL NATURE PRESERVE FUND FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A BENCH AND PURCHASE OF A PLAQUE IN MEMORY OF HAROLD WATSON
MOTION SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER TENHAVE
MOTION CARRIED
7-0-0

OTHER BUSINESS

- Beaver Study RFP, update

Commissioner Perry remarked although he has been in contact with a few individuals at the University of New Hampshire (UNH) Cooperative Extension, not a great deal of progress has been made. His intent is to follow up at the end of the week when school is back in session.

Chairman Tenhave requested a draft proposal be provided in advance of the February meeting for consideration by the Commission at that time.

- Forestry Plans, Path to getting these going

Commissioner Kras noted she continues to collect examples of plans, and anticipates having information available for the February meeting. Chairman Tenhave stated the intent to be for the Commission to settle on a template for use with future forestry plans.

- Annual Report and visit with Town Council

Commissioners were provided with a draft Annual Report as well as a draft of the PowerPoint presentation to be made during the Annual Review with the Town Council and asked to provide feedback.

Commissioner Perry stated he is pleased with the information provided and the way in which it is intended to be presented. Chairman Tenhave noted the Annual Report would include fiscal year-end financials, and those identified within the PowerPoint presentation would be updated in advance of the Annual Review. He noted the presentation to be similar in format to that which was presented during the last review with the addition of information pertaining to the parcel assessment tool and finance vision statements. He spoke of the importance of conveying the priority placed on acquisition in 2014.

Commissioner Lehman requested the presentation also list, under 2014 activities, creation of a specific plan/consistent recommendation for snow removal. He commented on the practice, over the past year, of recommending de-icing compounds be minimized and applicators be Green SnowPro certified, and spoke of his desire for this to be encouraged town-wide. He stated this to be a tool the UNH Cooperative Extension has made available to private contractors and noted State RSA (passed in November) reduces liability on contractors who participate in the program. He spoke of towns that have participated in the UNH course and his surprise Merrimack was not one of them. The cost is \$60/person. He suggested the Commission consider providing seed monies for the initial training of Town Public Works employees with the hope the department would budget for future training.

Commissioner Perry brought the Commission's attention to the statement, which reads "Suggest an update of Chapter 111 of the Town Code on Conservation Properties and establish clear rules for the major properties." and suggested the Town Code might be the appropriate place to incorporate verbiage regarding SnoPro certification.

Chairman Tenhave questioned the will of the Commission relative to providing seed money for Public Works employees. Councilor Mahon suggested the department be responsible for the cost, and commented there may already be involvement through Road Scholar programs. He suggested the Chairman reach out to Adam Jacobs, Operations Manager, Highway Division, to ascertain whether or not training has already occurred. Commissioner Lehman stated he did not review the spreadsheet and is unsure if towns that have obtained training are listed. He was going off of a conversation he had with Earle Chase, New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services I-93 Corridor Salt Reduction Coordinator, who mentioned it took him 9 months to change the mind of the DPW of one of the towns through work with the Selectmen, etc. to make them aware of the financial benefit, e.g., federal monies available to pay for additional equipment for the town (being in the I-93 corridor) if they participated.

It was noted the Town is currently in the budget review process, which is an opportune time for such a recommendation to be brought forward.

Commissioner Lehman remarked he also learned most of the impact comes from private use, and commented it would be a positive direction for there to be some type of identified snow removal process addressed with owners of commercial properties.

Chairman Tenhave stated the recommendation would be included in the presentation, and thanked Commissioner Lehman for the suggestion.

- Right-To-Know Training, what date/time will you attend

Chairman Tenhave stated the available time/dates to be 7:30 p.m. January 21st, February 5th, and February 11th.

January 21, 2014: Commissioners Kras and Lehman

February 5, 2014: Commissioners Caron, Davies, Perry, and Tenhave

- Lock Boxes, new ones have arrived...but they are different

Chairman Tenhave spoke of small lock boxes constructed of plastic and metal and having four-digit combination locks, which are placed at a lot of the gates. Within the box is the key to the gate. A few of the boxes have been vandalized over the course of the past few years. When that occurs it becomes necessary to change not only the box, but the lock as well. A few versions of lock boxes have been tried; one was rejected as it required a key to gain access to the key. The most recent version is heavy duty and has the ability to have a combination requiring 5-10 digit combination (push buttons). He questioned whether the desire would be to replace all existing boxes with the newer heavy duty version or for replacement to occur on an as needed basis. To date, five (5) have been purchased; however, none have been installed. If moving to the newer version there would be a new number scheme individuals would have to be trained on, e.g., emergency personnel, etc. However; replacement on an as needed basis would result in a variety of types of boxes and combination schemes being in place. The cost of the heavy duty boxes is approximately \$30/each.

Commissioner Perry noted, in warmer weather, the majority of the boxes could be changed out over the course of a single day. Vice Chairman Caron stated his preference for all of the boxes to be replaced at the same time allowing for consistency. He volunteered to identify the required number of boxes for purchase. One of the initial five purchased will be put in place at the gate at Conservation Drive, which will allow time to determine whether there might be issues relative to water, freezing, etc.

- Seedling Giveaway

Commissioner Perry commented last year's growing season was not the most favorable resulting in the inability to purchase older seedlings. If duplicating last year's purchase, the cost would be approximately \$360.00 (last year was \$290.00). For the past 4-5 years the Commission has purchased all fir trees. An option would be to purchase some hard woods. Chairman Tenhave spoke of his personal experience with Black Walnuts. That year he purchased 6, four of which survived. Commissioner Kras questioned the number of non-native species being considered. Commissioner Perry stated the Commission has been trying to include non-invasive species that are desirable and encourage participation in the program. Commissioner Kras remarked something can be a non-invasive species for 50 years and suddenly become invasive.

Commissioner Perry stated a willingness to make adjustments to the proposal (seedling catalog can be viewed at www.NHNursery.com). Chairman Tenhave stated the item would be placed on the agenda for the Commission's next meeting.

Commissioner Davies noted the opening for an Alternate member of the Conservation Commission and stated he has been contacted by an individual interested in serving. Chairman Tenhave stated it to be the Town Council who appoints members to the Commission. He commented the individual contacted him and has been directed to state his interest in writing to the Town Hall and follow the Town Council process for appointment.

PRESENTATION OF THE MINUTES

Merrimack Conservation Commission..... December 2, 2013

The following amendments were offered:

Page 2, Line 2; add the word "and" before the words "was not developed."

Page 3, Line 10; add the word "fertilizer" after the words "slow release nitrogen"

Page 4, Line 56; replace "Tenhave" with "Lehman" when referring to the Commissioner who served as the Ex-Officio member.

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER PERRY TO ACCEPT AS AMENDED

MOTION SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER TENHAVE

MOTION CARRIED

5-0-2

Commissioners Kras and Lehman Abstained.

Merrimack Conservation Commission. December 12, 2013

The following amendments were offered:

Page 2, Line 60; replace "Angelo" with "Angela"

Page 3, Line 1; add the word "time" between the words "full" and "position"

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER PERRY TO ACCEPT AS AMENDED

MOTION SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER DAVIES

MOTION CARRIED

4-0-3

Commissioners Kras and Lehman and Councilor Mahon Abstained.

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Councilor Mahon spoke of a Bill relative to Conservation Commissions being considered in this legislative session. Commissioner Davies stated he would look into recent publications by the New Hampshire Municipal Association, and forward additional information to the Commission. Councilor Mahon stated his recollection the Bill is relative to the amount of land obtained by Commissions and its management.

Vice Chairman Caron extended his gratitude to members of the public and the Grater Woods Sub-Committee who participated in the bridge building project the weekend following Christmas. He stated it to be the largest bridge constructed on the property (32' long x 54" wide), took three hours to construct, and was completed without any glitches.

Commissioner Davies stated he was on the Red Maple Trail in Grater Woods the prior day, and was impressed with the manner in which the trail was groomed. He expressed his gratitude to Jason Wright, member of the Sub-Committee, for doing that work. Vice Chairman Caron remarked Mr. Wright has constructed a drag, which he tows behind his snowmobile. He uses it to drag all of the snowmobile accessible trails.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER PERRY TO ADJOURN

MOTION SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER DAVIES

MOTION CARRIED

7-0-0

The January 6, 2014 meeting of the Merrimack Conservation Commission was adjourned at 7:27 p.m.

Submitted by Dawn MacMillan