



Town of Merrimack, New Hampshire

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Planning - Zoning - Economic Development - Conservation

MERRIMACK CONSERVATION COMMISSION

NOVEMBER 7, 2016

MEETING MINUTES

A regular meeting of the Merrimack Conservation Commission was held on Monday, November 7, 2016 at 6:33 p.m. in the Merrimack Memorial Conference Room.

Chairman Gage Perry presided:

Members of the Commission Present: Matt Caron, Vice Chairman
Michael Boisvert
Cynthia Glenn
Gina Rosati, Alternate Member
Councilor Thomas Mahon

Members of the Commission Absent: Tim Tenhave, Alternate Member

Also in Attendance: Blake Bormuth, Boy Scouts Troop 424
Peter Mikolajczuk, Vice Chair, Horse Hill Nature Preserve Sub-Committee
Debra Huffman, Horse Hill Nature Preserve Sub-Committee
Roland Roberge, Horse Hill Nature Preserve Sub-Committee

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

APPOINTMENTS

1. Visit from Eagle Scout candidate Blake Bormuth

Commission to receive a presentation regarding Blake's work on the Spalding Foundation at Horse Hill Nature Preserve

Blake Bormuth, Troop 424, stated his Eagle project to be work on the Spalding Foundation at the Horse Hill Nature Preserve (HHNP). The intent is to rid the area of the vegetation that has grown up and over the fence and through the middle of the Spalding Foundation. The project will also include removal of the existing fencing, which surrounds the area, and is deteriorating. A new split rail fence (7 posts not including the corners on each section) will be put in its place. A plaque, identifying the area, will be placed on the rock that is located outside of the wall on the trail to the Spalding Foundation. In addition to the removal of the vegetation in and around the foundation, trees that are overhanging the area will be cut down to eliminate the potential for damage to the new fencing. Photos were provided identifying the proposed fence design and how the plaque would be placed on the stone (Boston stud method; multiple holes on the back of the plaque and a hole dug into the face of the rock).

Scout Bormuth identified the area where the debris from the tree removal would be placed. The fencing materials that would be removed would be taken to the transfer station. When asked how the trees would be removed, he stated a chainsaw would be utilized. No scouts would be handling automated tools.

Those tasks would be handled by adult volunteers. The trees would be cut down, cut into smaller sections, and moved to an area away from any existing trails.

Chairman Perry questioned what if anything, would be required in terms of protective gear, etc. Councilor Mahon reiterated the statement that no one under the age of 18 would be allowed to operate mechanical equipment, and suggested the adults performing the task would understand the need for protective equipment. He noted, as the activity is being conducted as a troop activity, there would be insurance coverage. He suggested the scout check with the Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director, Paul Micali, to determine if there is the need to supply the Town with a copy of a Certificate of Insurance Coverage identifying the Town as an insured party, in advance of doing the work. When asked, Scout Bormuth stated his belief there are three trees; only one of a significant size (not large enough that he could not wrap his arms around it).

Scout Bormuth stated his understanding there is the need to gain approval for the wording that would be placed on the plaque.

The cost of all materials was included in the packet provided, and included the cost of lumber (assuming nothing would be donated). Scout Bormuth stated his assumption Home Depot would be donating wood and other materials, but did not want to include that as, at this time, he is unclear of the amount that would be donated.

Fundraising will be bake sales conducted at Shaws and Tractor Supply in Merrimack. Friends, family members, and fellow scouts will be asked to donate bake sale goods. Scouts will volunteer to assist in the fundraisers as a means of gaining service hours. During work days, he and adult leaders will utilize trucks to transport wood and other materials to the site. If the gate is opened, they can drive directly to the site.

At the HHNP, there are certain plants that were brought over by Captain Spalding (mid-1700s) who is the individual who constructed the home that once sat on the foundation. There are Lilacs that can be seen during the spring time, Honeysuckles, grapes, etc. Those will be preserved. When asked, Scout Bormuth stated his intention to erect small signage in the areas of the plants identifying them and providing the historical information.

Chairman Perry noted Scout Bormuth gave his presentation at a meeting of the HHNP Sub-Committee, and commented, at that time, there was some concern expressed with regard to some of the plantings. He questioned if those plants have been identified.

Debra Huffman, HHNP Sub-Committee, responded the Lilacs are very important, and Scout Bormuth is aware of which Lilacs are to be preserved. There are some small herbals, but unfortunately at this time of year it is very difficult to identify their location. She stated she will work with the scout in the spring to see if she can identify them. She is aware of those that are of concern.

When asked, Scout Bormuth stated he would look to begin work on the project as early as possible during the spring. His deadline is May 25th, which is his 18th Birthday. Once turning 18, scouts can no longer work on their Eagle project. The project itself has to be completed by that date. Fundraising and clearing of materials such as the fencing can be done in the winter.

When asked, Scout Bormuth stated the Historical Society would be approving the language for the signage.

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER CARON TO MOVE THE PROJECT FORWARD TO THE TOWN COUNCIL
MOTION SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER GLENN
MOTION CARRIED
6-0-0

STATUTORY/ADVISORY BUSINESS - None

OLD BUSINESS

1. Andrew Duane: Secretary Wildcat Falls

Will present costs for dog waste bags

Mr. Duane was not in attendance.

2. Horse Hill Nature Preserve (HHNP) – New Trail Discussion

Review Summit Trail Extension from October 12, 2016 Walk

Peter Mikolajczuk, Vice Chair, HHNP Sub-Committee, stated there to be an existing trail that goes half-way up to the top of Horse Hill, stops, and shoots back onto the powerlines. The desire is to extend the trail to the top of Horse Hill. However, in the area of the powerlines, it is eroding. The proposed trail would move users more into the woods in a snaked path to the top of Horse Hill. The other trail could revive itself and grow back in over time.

Commissioner Boisvert questioned if the other trail follows the powerline right-of-way, and was told it does. Mr. Mikolajczuk remarked every three years, when the area is cut, the trail reappears. Presently it is grown over. There is an exposed ground wire that runs through there. When asked if anyone has contacted Eversource about the exposed wire, Ms. Huffman responded the Sub-Committee has spoken with them in years past, and they are aware.

Mr. Mikolajczuk noted both the Sub-Committee and the Commission have walked the area. All are in agreement it is a nice area for a trail. He identified the area being discussed, which connects to the existing trail that goes across the top of Horse Hill. The trail is known by different names. On some GPS maps it is identified as Plumber Trail. Vice Chairman Caron noted the map currently identifies it as Fat Cat. It was suggested the Sub-Committee identify a permanent trail name. Mr. Mikolajczuk stated the Sub-Committee would not meet for some time, and he was hopeful the trail could be put in before snowfall. Ms. Huffman stated a meeting of the Sub-Committee could be called. Vice Chairman Caron commented when mapping the area with representatives of the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC), that trail came up on the equipment being used as Fat Cat. What is of most importance is what appears on the signpost and map. Ms. Huffman noted there is a family that was involved in creating that original trail who lost a daughter. Plumber Trail is what she had called the trail.

Chairman Perry noted the trail had been walked by him, Vice Chairman Caron, Mr. Mikolajczuk, and Ms. Huffman. The trail appeared to meet everyone's qualifications. Ms. Huffman commented what is being proposed is a single track trail, which is okay in this instance because the other trail will remain open for those wishing to utilize an alternative.

MOTION MADE BY COMMISSIONER BOISVERT TO APPROVE THE TRAIL CURRENTLY KNOWN AS PLUMBER TRAIL

MOTION SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER GLENN

MOTION CARRIED

6-0-0

There being no objection, the Commission went out of the regular order of business to take up Item #1 under New Business.

1. Horse Hill Nature Preserve (HHNP): Trail Courtesy / Yield to Signs

Peter Mikolajczuk: Vice Chair HHNP will present cost, placement and installation of signs

Mr. Mikolajczuk stated the goal is for the signs to be visible to mountain bikers and walkers. The intent would be to place them at the kiosks as well as in a few areas inside of the HHNP where mountain bikers or hikers are more apt to stop and rest, e.g., at the top of Blodgett Hill where a lot of trails descend from. The signs would remind users to yield to horses. Mr. Mikolajczuk stated there to be a total of 6 signs; four to be placed at gates and two inside the HHNP (on existing posts).

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER CARON TO APPROVE THE SUBMISSION FORM FOR THE EXPENDITURE OF AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY FIVE DOLLARS (\$125.00) FOR THE PURCHASE OF SIGNAGE FOR THE HORSE HILL NATURE PRESERVE. FUNDS ARE AVAILABLE IN FUND 53
MOTION SECONDED BY COUNCILOR MAHON

MOTION CARRIED

6-0-0

The Commission returned to the regular order of business.

3. Water Level/Beaver Update

Beaver Solutions reviewed a couple of areas in town; Review the recommendations

Mike Callahan, Owner, Beaver Solutions LLC, reviewed the section of trail off the bottom of Palmieri Drive, and has provided recommendations for long-term solutions to protect the trail and bridge, which included cost estimates.

However, Mr. Callahan suggested there to be less costly intervention, which he believes would be equally successful. They include diverting the trail away from the area (to higher ground) that has flooded in the past (approx. 40' impacted), hand digging a small trench in the overflow area to assist in diverting flooding waters back to the original stream channel, to help protect the bridge, remove, by hand, the small amount of woody debris currently under the bridge, and move a few of the in-stream large rocks under the bridge to further decrease the beavers' desire to dam under the bridge.

Chairman Perry questioned the will of the Commission. He commented, although he is in favor of the Commission performing the work, he is struggling with trying to keep up with Madison Lane, where the level of beaver activity is great.

Mr. Mikolajczuk spoke of having been in the area the prior Saturday, after recent rain, and commented the area did not appear to be too wet. The Sub-Committee discussed re-routing the trail away from a wet area, but it has been so dry they have been waiting for the need to do it. He looked under the bridge, and does not believe the beaver are trying to build under there; it is more that debris washes down and gets collected. Some members of the Sub-Committee have recently been in the area and cleaned some debris out. He stated the area seems to be okay for now.

Chairman Perry questioned if the desire is to continue with the manual efforts. Mr. Mikolajczuk stated that would be his preference. He commented it appears the beaver are working their way through the HHNP from Lastowka. He believes they will continue upward and away from the trails and more into the core of the HHNP. Roland Roberge, HHNP Sub-Committee, stated agreement. He noted he and Sub-Committee member Don Laliberte visited the area with Mr. Callahan. He stated his opinion the re-routing of the trail would not be that difficult. The only concern he would have is for the bikers that come down off the hill. There is a section where water builds up, comes down the trail, and freezes. If the trail were re-routed more towards the east there are not many large trees. He suggested that be the approach, and that it be reviewed in a year's time.

A consensus was reached that the Sub-Committee continue the efforts to address the issue manually.

Chairman Perry noted Mr. Callahan also visited the area behind Madison Lane. There is no set streambed in the area where the beavers are damming up. There is an area that ponds; multiple low-land areas. There is no one place for Beaver Solutions to tackle. That leaves the Commission in a position of either removing the animals or the constant removal of the dams. He noted trapping was conducted in that area a few years back, which resulted in two seasons free of the overwhelming issue.

NEW BUSINESS

2. Invasives Study

Chairman Perry stated the Commission is in receipt of an email from a citizen noting the discovery of a large amount of Burning Bush located in the HHNP, and requesting information on the Commission's invasive plan. It was noted the same problem exists with the same plant in the Wasserman Conservation Area.

Chairman Perry commented there is a large amount of invasives present in Town, and there is no formalized plan for addressing this issue. He used the example of the issue recently addressed at Brookside Drive, and the damage Knotweed was causing to a resident's property.

Chairman Perry stated the desire for Commissioners to consider possible avenues that could be pursued as a means of tackling the issue. He suggested a starting point may be in identifying/marketing the areas with known growth. Councilor Mahon commented, there is Burning Bush located on his property, which will eventually be washed down into the drainage right-of-way that runs next to his property and down into the HHNP. Chairman Perry commented a large issue with that is the birds that eat from the bush and the seeds survive in their defecation. Councilor Mahon commented the growth on his property is his issue, but the area on the other side of the wall (10' x 60' strip) is a Town issue. Councilor Mahon suggested, given the issue is not limited to Commission owned/managed properties, getting together with the Public Works Department (PWD) and other entities that manage properties to identify what is occurring and a means of addressing the cost of subjugation of the plants.

Chairman Perry requested Commissioners take note of areas where such plantings are witnessed.

3. Wetland Alteration Study – Molly Jacobson

Chairman Perry spoke of the pamphlet Ms. Jacobson did on the HHNP that identifies insects/bugs in the area. She is currently doing a wetlands impact study, and has chosen the Middle School for the area she will do the study on. The study is a school project. She will share it with the Commission when completed. She is currently in the fact-finding stage, and Ms. Casparius, Secretary, Community Development Department, is providing her with the information the Town/Commission has on the wetlands and the work that was done in the area for the school. She has also been provided with the names and contact information for members of the Commission in case she has questions.

OTHER BUSINESS

- Update on Jeff Littleton's work at our Continental Boulevard property

Chairman Perry stated Mr. Littleton will likely be present at the Commission's first meeting in December. A rough draft of his report is anticipated in the coming weeks. He was able to capture the last turtle, and now has all of the telemetry off the turtles. He has not yet had the opportunity to review the trail re-route at the HHNP.

- NRPC Trail Mapping update

Chairman Perry stated the work to be ongoing. He spoke of having run into the NRPC representative over the weekend at the bottom of the school loop, and noted they walked the lower loop, went out to the gate and back, down the still unnamed trail that goes by the overlook and ends up in the back of the outdoor classroom, and down to the Bambi Trail. Vice Chairman Caron noted he would be at the NRPC's office on Thursday to provide assistance.

When asked about the progress of the construction of the bridge for the Outdoor Classroom, Chairman Perry stated the material has been ordered, and he is awaiting information on expected delivery.

- Update on Land Donations - None
- Update on encroachment into Wasserman Conversation Area

Chairman Perry noted the information included with the agenda packet. He commented it appears to be pretty well managed and addressed. The item can be removed from future agendas.

- Website update

In the absence of Commissioner Tenhave, the update was postponed.

- Update on Grater Road bypass road design & construction.

Chairman Perry stated there to have not been any additional work done. Efforts are underway to coordinate a date/time to continue the work. It may be that the PWD can work independently now that the base trail has been laid out.

- Sub-Committee updates

Vice Chairman Caron stated the Grater Woods Sub-Committee will meet next on November 15th.

PRESENTATION OF THE MINUTES

Merrimack Conservation Commission. October 17, 2013

MOTION BY COUNCILOR MAHON TO TABLE UNTIL THE NEXT REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING

MOTION SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER CARON

MOTION CARRIED

6-0-0

PUBLIC COMMENT

With regard to the new trail at the HHNP, Ms. Huffman noted there to have been some concern regarding the initial section of the trail, which moves towards Long Pond. She stated she has identified what she believes to be a great compromise; an easy way down, which she believes would be acceptable to the Sub-Committee and would address the concerns raised by Vice Chairman Caron regarding users having a means to get down to Post #14. She questioned how to move forward.

Chairman Perry responded, as with any trail, the Commission would look to the Sub-Committee to flag the trail, which could then be walked by the Commission. Once that has occurred, the Commission can look to approve the trail. Vice Chairman Caron stated a willingness to walk the trail along with members of the Sub-Committee.

Ms. Huffman stated the desire for a future agenda to include a discussion of issues arising out of multiple types of trail users, e.g., single track versus wider trails. She stated the goal of the Sub-Committee to be that all users can utilize all main trails unless the brochure specifically states a particular trail is designed for mountain bikers.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Vice Chairman Caron spoke of the successful Trail Day conducted at the HHNP over the weekend. A section of the Outer Ledges Trail was addressed; cleaned out areas experiencing erosion issues. He thanked the volunteers who came out to help.

Commissioner Boisvert spoke of knowing an individual who has a Solar Photovoltaic (PV) System on his home, and questioned if the Commission would be interested in promoting such systems. The resident has offered to open his home on a Saturday to allow individuals to view the installation. Chairman Perry stated he would be interested. Commissioner Boisvert suggested such an event could be conducted during the spring. The Commission was in support of such an endeavor.

Commissioner Boisvert suggested the need for the Commission to identify priorities in terms of submitting grant applications. He commented Commissioner Tenhave had mentioned seeking a grant for the South Grater Road bypass project, and the potential for grant(s) that would support land acquisition, etc. He commented the most desirable grant application is through the State's Aquatic Resource Mitigation (ARM) Fund. Chairman Perry stated his belief the Commission could be successful seeking funds from the ARM Fund to address the South Grater Road Bypass project.

Commissioner Rosati commented the ARM Fund would be looked at for the Fields Farm project as well. Commissioner Boisvert remarked there are three different projects that the Commission could consider seeking those funds for. Chairman Perry questioned how mitigation would be worked into Fields Farms (recreational only). Commissioner Rosati stated she has not yet started working on that. Commissioner Boisvert suggested the Commission discuss, in a non-public session, its priorities in terms of land purchases.

Chairman Perry commented the home page of the website will have a gallery/revolving slideshow. Wendy Wetherbee, Wetherbee Creative, has requested photos. He requested Commissioners having interesting wildlife photos forward a copy to him.

Chairman Perry spoke of having received an email on ebikes; electric bicycles. It will be placed on a future agenda for discussion. Vice Chairman Caron stated his belief there will be the need for a policy regarding how to handle them on the trails. He commented they are more in line with dirt bikes than with bicycles.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER CARON TO ADJOURN
MOTION SECONDED BY COUNCILOR MAHON
MOTION CARRIED
6-0-0

The November 7, 2016 special meeting of the Merrimack Conservation Commission was adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

Submitted by Dawn MacMillan