



Town of Merrimack, New Hampshire

Community Development Department

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Planning - Zoning - Economic Development - Conservation

MERRIMACK CONSERVATION COMMISSION

JANUARY 7, 2019

MEETING MINUTES

A regular meeting of the Merrimack Conservation Commission was held on Monday, January 7, 2019 at 6:32 p.m. in the Merrimack Memorial Conference Room.

Chair Gage Perry presided:

Members of the Commission Present: Matt Caron, Vice Chair
Michael Boisvert
Cynthia Glenn
Steven Perkins
Gina Rosati
Tim Tenhave, Alternate Member

Members of the Commission Absent: Councilor Peter Albert

Also in Attendance: Jeff Littleton, Moosewood Ecological, LLC
Don Laliberte, 5 Danforth Road
Lynne Wenz, 17 Farmer Road

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

PUBLIC HEARINGS - None

APPOINTMENTS - None

STATUTORY/ADVISORY BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS

1. Moosewood Ecological, LLC. – update on ecological inventory of Grater Woods and discussion regarding winter walk

Jeff Littleton, Moosewood Ecological, LLC, spoke of planning underway (gathering of information and aerial photography interpretation) getting ready for the prime field season, which is underway at this time with winter tracking sessions. He is preparing for the bird surveys, vernal pool surveys, turtle trapping, etc. He is seeking intern(s) to help with the project.

He spoke of conducting a winter walk to look for sign, habitats, and, weather permitting, mammal tracking, and suggested the event be promoted as a winter wildlife ecology walk so that it is understood to be more encompassing.

The Grater Woods Winter Wildlife Ecological Walk was scheduled for Saturday, March 9, 2019 beginning at the Merrimack Middle School upper parking lot at 9:00 a.m.

A vernal pool hike was scheduled for Saturday, May 4, 2019 at Grater Woods between the hours of 9:00 - 11:30 a.m. The walk will begin at the Merrimack Middle School upper parking lot.

Commissioner Tenhave noted trail additions at Grater Woods. Maps have been updated, and are available on the website; Merrimackoutdoors.org.

Commissioner Glenn questioned if Mr. Littleton has noted any change in beaver populations. She spoke of the beavers having moved from the pond in the Horse Hill Nature Preserve (HHNP) to a different area and cutting down a lot of trees. She questioned if it may be due to a population increase. Her theory is that it is easier egress. Mr. Littleton remarked if they are raising the level, they are flooding out their old home. They want a new lodge. Sometimes you will see lodges inside the middle of the pond and at times there are bank lodges. As the water changes, they will move. That pond can only support so many because they are extremely territorial.

Commissioner Tenhave stated beavers have clear-cut ½ an acre. Vice Chair Caron noted they are cutting down Pine trees as well, which is unusual. Mr. Littleton remarked he has heard there are sometimes particular minerals or nutrients in pine that they may seek out, but usually once they are starting to hit the conifers that means they are eating themselves out of house and home.

Commissioner Tenhave noted he has witnessed Hickory in the HHNP, and questioned how to encourage its growth. Mr. Littleton stated they do a little better with a bit more light. A little intervention/management would be helpful for them to germinate. They are more of a mid-successional species. The Southern Appalachian species is all over Merrimack because it is warm, dry, and sandy. They respond to fire a lot. The shags help to insulate the live tissue underneath that acts as an insulator from fire.

2. 19th Annual Seedling Giveaway

The Commission discussed the seedling [species](#) available for spring 2019. A review of the species that were most popular in the past few years will be conducted to help identify the types of species for this year's event.

The event was scheduled for Saturday, May 11, 2019 at the Currier Orchards.

3. Annual duck box cleaning & inventory

Sunday, January 20, 2019 was set as the date for cleaning & inventory. The event will begin at 9:00 a.m. at Beebe Lane.

4. Parks & Rec. - 2019 Winter Carnival

Scheduled for Saturday, February 23, 2019. The Commission discussed whether to man a booth at the event. Commissioner Rosati suggested the Sklar Waterfront property could be promoted. Vice Chair Caron commented historically the best response has been when there were large maps available for view. Commissioner Rosati stated the fairy door raffle was not as well received as she had hoped. However, the duck boxes created interest. Vice Chair Caron commented on the need for visuals.

Vice Chair Caron spoke of the need to replace a few of the duck boxes each year. The available supply is down to a single box of the new design being used.

Commissioner Rosati suggested displaying photos of and providing information on beaver damage.

**MOTION BY COMMISSIONER BOISVERT TO PURCHASE TEN (10) WOOD DUCK BOXES AT AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED FOUR HUNDRED DOLLARS (\$400.00).
SOURCE OF FUNDING IS FUND 53
MOTION SECONDED BY VICE CHAIR CARON
MOTION CARRIED
7-0-0**

Vice Chair Caron suggested use of foam core (or similar) maps such as those located in the kiosks. The suggestion was made that the maps could later be placed in the conference room to be available during sub-committee meetings, etc. Chair Perry will question the types of cover that could be used for protection.

There is an empty kiosk at the Wasserman Conservation Area. A map could be placed there. There is also the need for two (2) of the larger maps (and plexiglass) for kiosks at the HHNP; Gerard Drive and Watanic Bowmen parking lot.

OLD BUSINESS - None

OTHER BUSINESS

- Sub-committee Updates

Wildcat Falls

Commissioner Rosati stated Karen Labonte would be filling out the required paperwork for submission to the Town Council (January 24th mtg.) relative to the request for an exception to the dawn to dusk restriction to accommodate a moonlight snowshoe walk. Chair Perry recommended several options be presented for potential dates (full moon/snow dependent), and that a request be made that, in future years, the approval process be through the Town Manager and/or her proxy.

Sklar Waterfront

Vice Chair Caron commented on the level of activity in the area. He noted there had been areas of entrance where signs were not visible. That is no longer the case unless coming in through the river. Photos were taken of each of the signs put up and locations noted.

The activity seen was that of four wheelers and motorized bikes. Asked if there have been incidents of target shooting, Vice Chair Caron indicated there have been. Commissioner Boisvert stated there to be

enough debris for a smaller cleanup in the spring. The rocks that were placed are working as hoped. Commissioner Tenhave has requested additional rocks.

Grater Woods

Will meet next on January 29, 2019 at 6:30 p.m. in the Memorial Conference Room. The single focus of that meeting is updating of the Stewardship Plan.

PRESENTATION OF MINUTES

Merrimack Conservation Commission. [December 17, 2018](#)

The following amendments were offered:

Page 3, Line 17; replace “low-phosphate” with “no phosphate”
Page 5, Line 3; replace “Gauge” with “Gage”

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER BOISVERT TO ACCEPT, AS AMENDED

MOTION SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER GLENN

MOTION CARRIED

6-0-1

Vice Chair Caron Abstained

PUBLIC COMMENT

Don Laliberte stated the desire to lodge a formal complaint regarding beaver activity in the HHNP behind sign #3 and along Lastowka Pond. A series of photographs was provided. He commented on a particular tree where beaver have chewed all around, but it has not yet fallen.

Mr. Laliberte commented on the timeliness of the distribution of meeting dates for the Commission and sub-committees. By the time the calendar was published, the submission date for items to appear on the agenda for this meeting had passed. He stated he was before the Commission as a private citizen as the HHNP Sub-committee will not meet until February 4, 2019.

Mr. Laliberte stated he reached out to Commissioner Glenn informing of his desire to speak at this meeting. He questioned the established procedure for having items placed on the Commission’s agenda.

Commissioner Tenhave stated the calendar lists a submission deadline, which is in place for items that go through the Community Development office, e.g., submission of plans, etc. That process is always available for use in having items placed on the agenda. Another option is to reach out to the Chair. As a representative of a sub-committee, reaching out to the Liaison to the Commission is also a means of having an item placed on the agenda.

Mr. Laliberte stated he was filing the formal complaint per the Commission’s Beaver Management Policy (revised 3-25-02), Item C #s 1 and 2:

- C. *Objective: To mitigate the building of beaver structures and potential flooding of Town- owned lands.*

1. *Upon receiving a formal complaint regarding nuisance beaver activity on Town-owned lands, the Conservation Commission shall evaluate the effect on the site and other abutting parcels; examine detailed site map (s) and visit the site to determine the scope of the issue.*
2. *Regarding mitigation, the Conservation Commission shall consider the following alternatives:*
 - *Taking no action;*
 - *Installing properly designed “beaver pipes;”*
 - *Removing the beaver dam which may require a wetlands permit;*
 - *Relocation of the beaver by live trapping; and*
 - *Removal of the beaver by conventional trapping procedures.”*

The UNH Cooperative Extension identifies the beaver as the world’s second largest rodent. Breeding takes place in winter, pregnancy lasts about 90 days with the young arriving in April or May. They are capable of felling some very large deciduous trees, and rarely travel more than 100 yards from edge of pond in search of food or building material.

In late November, the sub-committee received an email regarding beaver damage, from member Tim Adams. On December 3rd, Mr. Laliberte and sub-committee member Bruce Peterson visited the area. Fifty plus hardwood and birch trees had been cut by beaver. After approx. four hours of work, they were able to re-open the trail with only a slight variation. As they were preparing to leave, they heard a large crack and turned to see a 100’ tall hardwood fall about 30’ from where they stood. Because there remained trees that would soon fall, they decided to reach out to Commissioner Glenn to make the Town aware of the situation. Lori Barrett, Operations Manager, Public Works Department (PWD), sent a crew out who did a fine job.

Mr. Laliberte stated there to have been no other beaver activity level on this scale anywhere else in the HHNP. Large trees are being cut by the beavers for limbs and bark only. There is the need to protect all our natural resources. He requested permission to meet with a Wildlife Biologist from New Hampshire Fish & Game for recommendations that can be forwarded to the Commission.

Chair Perry questioned the hopeful outcome. Mr. Laliberte stated his opinion there is a family unit in the lodge greater than 12 beaver. The elders are pushing the younger beaver out. They are doing more damage than is typical. There are ways to curtail some of the activity, e.g., wrapping trees with a hardware cloth. He has heard another option to be utilizing motor oil to paint the area of the tree beaver would chew on. Chair Perry stated there would not be use of a petroleum product on the trees. Mr. Laliberte stated the desire for identification of alternative measures.

Chair Perry remarked if able to stop the activity in one area, they will simply move to another. Mr. Laliberte stated the lodge is not supporting the dam, e.g., very few new limbs were observed on the dam as well as the lodge.

Commissioner Tenhave noted the beavers are not necessarily building the dams. They are taking the branches and burying them underwater as a food source for the winter. Mr. Laliberte commented that can be seen with some of the bark they have pulled off some of the trees. He reiterated his concern for the safety of users of the area.

Mr. Laliberte remarked there must be a balance; natural resources and wildlife. He reiterated the desire to seek recommendations from the NH Fish & Game and restated his willingness to coordinate that effort.

Commissioner Tenhave commented recommendations are typically sought when there is an identified goal, and questioned the desired goal for that portion of the HHNP. Mr. Laliberte stated the desire to be the safety of human users. It was noted the Commission could simply close that area of the property until the activity stops.

Commissioner Tenhave commented he finds what is occurring in the area extremely cool. It is nature. There is no other instance of that happening on any other of the Commission's properties. He would like to see it run its course. He would prefer the Commission stop human use of the area.

Hearing the concern with damage being done on healthy trees, Commissioner Tenhave spoke of rebirth. Chair Perry commented the amount of growth that would be seen on the forest floor would be amazing. Commissioner Tenhave commented on the other types of wildlife that will be plentiful. Mr. Laliberte suggested there would not be regrowth in the area noting there is nobody that will be moving those downed trees. He is concerned with its current appearance and the safety aspect, and would like the Commission to take formal action on his desire to reach out to NH Fish & Game.

It was noted, for the Commission to take formal action, the request would have to appear as a publicized agenda item. The Commission could shut down the trail under safety concerns. Mr. Laliberte stated, even with the closure of the trail, people would continue to use it. Chair Perry stated the Commission cannot stop that. It can post the trail closure notice. When asked, Chair Perry stated, if the decision of the Commission is to close the trail, any additional trees that fall should be left. Asked how he feels about that option, Vice Chair Caron stated he has not been in the area in a few months and has not seen the damage. If posted as closed, then the trail is closed. There are ways around the trail. He suggested the biggest user group of the area to be hikers.

Mr. Laliberte spoke of benches that would be closed off unless walking a distance further to gain access. Commissioner Rosati commented one of the reasons for her interest in the Commission was to stop tree removal. However, the Commission is conserving for animals as well, and she would like to witness the activity of allowing nature to take its course providing safety was addressed with trail closure.

Mr. Laliberte reiterated his desire to meet with a Wildlife Biologist onsite. He spoke of an interest in understanding why the beaver are doing what they are in this area. Commissioner Rosati commented on the earlier discussion with Mr. Littleton and remarks made regarding the size of the population, the younger population carelessly falling trees. If the size is the problem, nature will take its course there too. There are other options. Chair Perry noted NH Fish & Game keeps a list of trappers that can be contacted.

Commissioner Tenhave spoke of the beaver study that was done. The Commission has been educated as to how they behave and what they are doing and why they are doing it. That data can be revisited. What is known is that removing beaver just opens the door for more beaver to come. Commissioner Rosati stated it is also known that nature will take its course; within a few years, they will run out of food and will move on. They will disburse as they move on. Commissioner Glenn commented this is where we want the beaver to do this, in the forest.

The item will be placed on the agenda for the Commission's January 28, 2019 meeting.

Lynne Wentz, also of HHNP Sub-committee, stated she shares the concern for the safety of hikers. She believes the area needs to be monitored for safety whether through trail closure or just monitoring the condition of the trees. She stated her belief the lack of snow has encouraged beavers to be more active. She suggested it would be helpful to educate the public on beaver activity. She would like for someone to work with Mr. Littleton, NH Fish & Game or the Audubon Society to get to the bottom of the situation.

Commissioner Tenhave stated the Commission has done extensive work learning about beavers and a great deal has been documented. What is being seen is perfectly normal and natural. It is just that it is more visible. The Commission has had NH Fish & Game and Wildlife Biologists involved. There are members of the Commission who feel very comfortable with and understand what is going on. The website provides the information. At this point, he does not feel compelled to bring anyone from NH Fish & Game out.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Chair Perry informed the Commission of an email received from Peter Mikolajczuk, Chair, HHNP Sub-committee, inquiring about purchasing lumber & supplies to re-deck existing boardwalk and construct an additional section along the Quarry Trail.

A list was included of materials needed and associated cost (slightly under \$600). The request was for the Community Development Department to purchase the identified materials.

Commissioner Tenhave stated the boardwalk does need repair. However, there the issue is more extensive. When coming in from Old Kings Highway there is an entire section of trail that is completely impassable. Users are creating side trails by walking around the wet area. There is no bridging there. He suggested there to be an issue of whether to close the trail until the ground freezes (and stays frozen). Vice Chair Caron remarked, during times of rain, the HHNP is an unpleasant place. Commissioner Tenhave stated, until there is a good freeze that stays, it will continue to be a mess. This week's weather will only worsen the situation.

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER TENHAVE TO AUTHORIZE THE EXPENDITURE OF AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED SIX HUNDRED DOLLARS (\$600.00) TO REPAIR DECKING AND OTHER BRIDGE WORK ON THE QUARRY TRAIL. SOURCE OF FUNDING IS FUND 53

MOTION SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER GLENN

MOTION CARRIED

7-0-0

The Commission discussed the possibility of temporarily closing the HHNP as a result of weather-related conditions.

Asked whether the PWD addressed the large tree on the Red Maple Trail, Chair Perry stated when they arrived, the tree had already been cut and pushed aside.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER GLENN TO ADJOURN
MOTION SECONDED BY VICE CHAIR CARON
MOTION CARRIED
7-0-0

The January 7, 2019 meeting of the Merrimack Conservation Commission was adjourned at 8:41 p.m.

Submitted by Dawn MacMillan