



Town of Merrimack, New Hampshire

Community Development Department

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Planning - Zoning - Economic Development - Conservation

MERRIMACK CONSERVATION COMMISSION

OCTOBER 4, 2021

MEETING MINUTES

A meeting of the Merrimack Conservation Commission was held on Monday, October 4, 2021, 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
Gage Perry
Michael Drouin, Alternate Member
Ellen Kolb, Alternate Member

Members of the Commission Absent: Cynthia Glenn
Eric Starr
Councilor Andy Hunter

Also Participating: Chris Guida, Fieldstone Land Consultants
David Trippett, 102 Front Street

Chair Perkins designated Commissioner Kolb to sit in for Councilor Hunter and Commissioner Drouin for Commission Glenn.

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

PUBLIC HEARINGS - None

APPOINTMENTS - None

STATUTORY/ADVISORY BUSINESS

1. **Gary and Diane Kudalis (applicants/owners)** - Review for acceptance and consideration of a Site Plan to construct a 6,000 s.f. Equestrian Training Facility and related site improvements. The parcel is located at 102 Joppa Road in the R-2 (Residential), and Aquifer Conservation Districts. Tax Map 6C, Lot 388. Case #PB2021-37

Chris Guida, Certified Wetland Scientist/Soil Scientist, Fieldstone Land Consultants, stated the proposal is an enclosed riding arena. Although uncertain of the exact type of covering, he noted it would be open on the ends. The project was before the Commission as it falls within the Aquifer Conservation District.

Mr. Guida remarked he performed the wetland delineation on the property a few years prior but has been out of the loop in regard to the engineering/design.

Displayed was an existing conditions plan, which delineated the existing home, horse barn and fenced paddocks as well as the location of the proposed riding arena. The existing driveway goes to the horse stall and splits to the house. Access is proposed to come off the existing driveway and down go the arena. Treatment swales are proposed along the edges. The area will have to be elevated (riding arenas require a specialized base). Drainage swales will pick up any runoff from the structure and treat it in a small treatment swale with a level spreader. Some tree clearing is proposed to accommodate the new access road.

On the slope are Canton soils after which the area flattens out and has a sandier soil. The area is primarily wooded or grassed and fairly flat. There are wetlands to the back of the lot, however, no proposed impact to the wetlands or wetland buffer.

Chair Perkins spoke of having read the Stormwater Management Report summary, which indicates decreased runoff rates during the 2, 25, and 50-year storms.

Asked if the number of animals would increase, Mr. Guida stated, to the best of his knowledge, it would not. There may be some transitioning in and out (existing barn). The parking lot will be gravel as it is now and will accommodate additional parking.

Asked for additional information on the level spreader, he stated it is a treatment swale that directs runoff through (vegetated swale) with typically a crushed stone Check Dam (filtration). When it reaches the end there is typically a different type of structure. With a level spreader it is basically a manufactured one that is like the wide end of a culvert. They are placed so that they are level. As water spills in, it goes from side to side and then spills onto the ground (instead of a point discharge from a culvert). It spreads out the infiltration area at the end of the swale.

NEW BUSINESS

- Sklar Sub-Committee new member – David Trippett

David Trippett attended the last Sub-committee meeting and expressed an interest in serving.

Mr. Trippett commented he views the property as a diamond in the rough. He enjoys fishing, hiking, and the outdoors in general. He and his wife have enjoyed walking at Sklar but have noted the need for some TLC. Vice Chair Boisvert has provided him with information on the history of the park and plans for the future.

Mrs. Creager was at the sub-committee meeting and spoke of previous discussions around the desire for a park in Merrimack that would match the one in Litchfield. He would like to see picnic tables added to the park to accommodate family gatherings.

Having spent a good deal of time in the park over the past few months, he has seen what occurs in the area. There are diehard carp fishermen that are there all the time and are catching 10-20 lb. fish. He has only noticed people four-wheeling in the back areas on two occasions. There has been talk of blocking off that area to stop that activity.

Mr. Trippett stated his desire to be part of the sub-committee and the development of this park. He would enjoy the opportunity to give back to the community in this way. He spoke of a desire to see what can be done in regard to a boat ramp noting those who use the area get stuck when trying to launch their boats.

Commissioner Perry commented on the boat launch being Town property. The Commission can make recommendations to the Town. He stated his belief Kyle Fox, Director, Public Works Department, is working on the logistics of moving the boat ramp to a different location.

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER ROSATI TO APPOINT DAVID TRIPPETT AS A FULL MEMBER OF THE SKLAR WATERFRONT PARK SUB-COMMITTEE WITH A TERM TO EXPIRE JUNE 30, 2023

**MOTION SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER KOLB
MOTION CARRIED
6-0-0**

- 2022 Membership dues - NH Association of Conservation Commissions (NHACC)

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER PERRY TO APPROVE THE INVOICE FROM THE NEW HAMPSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION COMMISSIONS FOR 2022 MEMBERSHIP DUES IN THE AMOUNT OF ONE THOUSAND FIFTY DOLLARS (\$1,050.00). SOURCE OF FUNDING IS FUND 53

**MOTION SECONDED BY CHAIR PERKINS
MOTION CARRIED
6-0-0**

- Rail proposal agenda

Chair Perkins noted information forwarded to the Commission earlier in the day regarding the proposed rail improvement that would bring commuter rail access up to Manchester. Feedback was requested.

A copy will be provided with the next agenda.

Commissioner Kolb suggested a request be made for a representative of the project to come before the Commission with a presentation on planned improvements to the bridge by Sklar.

Commissioner Perry suggested this to be an opportunity to get some work done towards putting an end to the four-wheel activity.

Should there be the desire to provide feedback on a specific mitigation project, the matter will be brought forward for discussion at a future meeting.

- Annual LCIP walk at Wasserman

As a requirement of funding received from the State's LCIP Program when the property was purchased, there is a need to conduct an annual survey of the property and complete and submit required paperwork to the State.

The walk was scheduled for Saturday, October 23, 2021 beginning at 9:00 a.m. at the resident lot.

- NHACC membership fees, annual meeting & conference

The Annual Meeting & Conference is scheduled for Saturday, November 6, 2021 from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. via Zoom.

Chair Perkins requested those who are interested in participating, make that desire known to him by Saturday, October 9th so that arrangements can be made for payment.

OLD BUSINESS

- SCA NH Corps - Trail and Land Management Services

As noted at the 9-20-21 meeting, the Student Conservation Association ([SCA](#)) gathers groups of young individuals (5-6), along with facilitators, to perform 11-day conservation projects (referred to as a hitch). Areas they specialize in include land management, trail work, and historic preservation. They are currently reviewing projects for 2022 and 2023. The cost of an 11-day hitch, which includes ten working days and a rest day mid-way through, is \$11,000. Project requests should be made by mid-October.

While performing projects, the group requires a location to camp. Chair Perkins noted his receipt of the request form. He has not heard back regarding what the cost would be to utilize Camp Sargent (the cost of a campsite would be an additional cost). The group conducted two 11-day hitches in Nashua last year during which they utilized Greenfield State Park.

Commissioner Rosati suggested the campsite could be on the park and recreation side of the Wasserman Conservation area, which would provide access to restrooms.

Commissioner Perry questioned if Camp Young Judaea in Amherst would be an option. It was suggested that the hitch would have to happen prior to the end of the school year.

Commissioner Kolb suggested the need to identify a specific project that would justify the expense. Commissioner Rosati stated the project would be the Grater Road Bypass. Commissioner Perry recommended contacting Dawn Tuomala, Deputy Director/Town Engineer, PWD, and questioned what aspect of the Grater Road Bypass project could be done by the SCA. The project involves tons of crushed stone, vibrating machinery, etc. Perhaps they could clear a path and stump it. Deputy Director Tuomala should be able to identify what aspects of the project could be addressed by the group.

Commissioner Rosati will reach out to Deputy Director Tuomala. Chair Perkins will reach out to the Town to determine the availability of Wasserman as a camping location.

Commissioner Rosati questioned the will of the Commission with regard to expending the funds. Vice Chair Boisvert responded he would have to know more about the specific project to be completed. Commissioner Perry remarked the bypass road will cost a great deal more than \$11,000. If the group could perform work that would reduce the overall cost by the value of the hitch, he would be supportive of the idea.

Commissioner Rosati questioned if the bridge at the Sklar Waterfront Park would be a cost-effective project. Commissioner Drouin stated he would do that for the cost of materials. Asked what the intent is with regard to the bridge, he stated the desire to address the needed repairs at the end of the bridge to allow it to be walked across once again. Commissioner Rosati stated the need for some clearing underneath to allow for better water flow and fill on the side to allow for easier passage. Commissioner Perry noted it is in a riparian zone, which means fill could not be put in the area without obtaining a permit from NHDES.

Commissioner Drouin suggested it best to allow the sub-committee to address the bridge, and that the The United States Naval Sea Cadet Corps ([Sea Cadets](#)) could assist.

- Flying Eagles Enhancement Project Steps. This item is a continued discussion from the 9/20/21 meeting.

Commissioner Drouin spoke of the information provided the Commission (copy attached). When the Flying Eagles started leasing space from the Town, it was a clear field. Because the area was not maintained, there has been growth.

The group is looking for approval to cut up to the road. Commissioner Drouin stated his preference to maintain a buffer. He is supportive of a 100' buffer from the roadway. He noted a particular corner (delineated on the map as area B). The bridge is in that area, and the proposal would increase visibility for people turning onto the bridge. Currently you have to make a wide angle turn to get over it safely.

The group does not wish to cut trees next to the railroad track. The stream that runs through area C would have the standard buffer. Commissioner Drouin stated the desire to provide the group the authority to cut trees that are over 15' in height in area C (drop and leave where land unless landing in the stream). He believes doing so would create a better habitat for birds and small animals.

Commissioner Perry asked for clarification the desire is to clear cut the area identified as area B and trees over 15' in area C. Area A would be clear cut leaving a buffer of 100' from the roadway.

Commissioner Drouin spoke of having met with the County Forester earlier in the day. He explained that the majority of the trees are Silver Maples that grow very quickly. By cutting the trees it creates early succession habitat, which is good for birds and small animals. Every 10 years they would want to cut. He suggested allowing the group to cut the trees and drop them. That would stop off-roading activity and would prohibit mowing. The work would not be done in a single cutting season.

The group is looking to cut 3-5 trees (notch) on Commission property (near parking area); to improve line of sight for landings. The area is covered with Bittersweet. He suggested a condition of continued permission to maintain the notch could be a requirement for the group to mow around the kiosk in the parking area.

Commissioner Kolb commented she has no issue with improving the line of sight for landing. She wishes for additional information regarding the removal of trees in area A. Commissioner Drouin stated the club flies airplanes, a lot of which contain liquid fuel. Quite a few crash in area A. It is hard to retrieve in that area. Commissioner Kolb commented she is unsure how walking through a forest of fallen logs would be any easier. Commissioner Drouin responded most times they either lose line of sight with their controllers or hit a tree. As area A is a Town parcel and was leased when it was open, clear field, if not provided permission, they could argue that it is their right because they leased a clear field.

Commissioner Rosati questioned who owns area C and was told the entire parcel is Town owned. Noted was the ability of the Commission to provide a recommendation, but that any decisions would have to be made by the Town Council.

Commissioner Perry stated the Commission has already indicated it would likely agree to cutting the trees on the Commission property, but that identification of which trees was required.

Commissioner Drouin stated the group wishes to cut in the wetland buffer of area C (Naticook Brook). That is what the Commission would be providing a recommendation on. Vice Chair Boisvert did not agree with the assessment that area C was discussed with the Forester.

Commissioner Rosati questioned the will of the Commission with regard to requesting the County Forester appear before the Town Council to discuss the area and the desired cut. She spoke of being leery of cutting down such a large area of trees. Asked if there are markings on the ground delineating the areas highlighted

on the map, Commissioner Drouin remarked it is clear as on the stream there is a thick buffer of ferns, and you can see where they mow.

Vice Chair Boisvert remarked area A is beyond their line of sight. Perhaps they need to cut the trees on the other side of the parking area and some trees in area B and the edge of area C, but he does not understand the amount of cutting proposed.

Noted was that the area is full of 15-20' tall trees. Commissioner Kolb remarked she would have no problem recommending they be permitted to remove trees in the parking lot area. There remains more discussion to be had around the larger areas.

Commissioner Drouin stated the desire of the group to create a walking bridge for easy access. Commissioner Rosati commented on the amount of clearing and her desire to visit the area. Vice Chair Boisvert spoke of having been part of the site visit earlier in the day, and that he does not recollect the discussion including area A.

Commissioner Drouin remarked he is against clear-cutting any land, but this would not be a loss; there are not a lot of low brush/shrub areas currently available. Should the group go to the Town with a request to conduct regular maintenance; return the land to the condition it was in when the lease began, the Commission would lose out on the opportunity to state trees could be cut, but shrubs must be left to grow.

Vice Chair Boisvert spoke of the need to understand the lease language.

Commissioner Rosati suggested the Commission bring the proposal forward to Tim Thompson, Director, Community Development Department. Commissioner Perry reiterated he is agreeable to removal of the few trees on Commission property noting he would request the same thing that was requested previously; identify which trees would be cut.

Commissioner Rosati stated the minutes of the meeting could be submitted to Director Thompson to inform him of the request being made to the Commission.

Commissioner Drouin offered to make a request for the group to come before the Commission. Commissioner Perry stated he would not want to waste their time as the property in question is that of the Town and any decision would be made by the Town Council. Commissioner Drouin reiterated that the wetland buffer would be involved, and was told the Commission could make a recommendation, but the decision is that of the Town.

Chair Perkins will discuss the request with Director Thompson and update the Commission at the next meeting. The Flying Eagles should mark the trees they wish to remove from Commission property so that the Commission can view them and reach a decision.

- Grater Woods stick bridge on Silverfish trail

Vice Chair Boisvert stated the stick bridge has been removed and a pressure treated bridge has been put in its place. He expressed gratitude to former Commissioner Matt Caron for leading the effort.

- Invasive plant treatments

Commissioner Rosati spoke of having put a request out on social media. Dan Ricker, Director of MYA Basketball, is knowledgeable of invasives and can treat some. Although unable to provide pricing

information without conducting a site walk, he did provide (copy attached) a list of how certain invasives could be addressed through the use of multi-year, repetitive mechanical methods.

There is a steam method made by Weedtechnics. The machine converts water into low-pressure steam and boiling water that destroys the internal cells of the plant. Although it works really well on grassy and soft wooded weeds, Mr. Ricker was uncertain it would work on thick wooded or thick stemmed vegetation.

Commissioner Perry commented on mechanical methods for removal of Knotweed being a multi-year effort and that a chemical approach is effective and cost effective.

Commissioner Rosati remarked if there are areas the Commission is interested in utilizing organic methods for invasive removal, Mr. Ricker would need to perform site walks to provide pricing. As the Commission had questions, e.g., effectiveness of Weedtechnics on Knotweed, Mr. Ricker will be invited to attend a future meeting to further the discussion. Commissioner Perry stated a willingness to accompany Mr. Ricker should he wish to conduct site walks prior to the next meeting.

Commissioner Drouin suggested the equipment be trialed on one property to see the results.

- Turtle tracker update

According to an email communication from Jeff Littleton, Moosewood Ecological, the two female turtles have not moved all summer. He stated his intent to take canoes into the wetlands in Grater Woods in search of them.

Commissioner Perry commented on prior discussion around the possibility of a placard of sorts that could be utilized during the few instances each year that a vehicle has to gain access to the properties for maintenance purposes. Commissioner Rosati will follow-up.

OTHER BUSINESS

- Sub-Committee Updates
 - Sklar - Fall action plan & potential tree work

Commissioner Drouin spoke of the loop area near the boat launch. The dirt road that traverses through is used by off-roaders to access the property. Branches were cut and piled on the road, which, for the past 3 weeks, has put a stop to the off-road activity. The rest of the tree and rocks will be placed in the area.

Vice Chair Boisvert spoke of the existing boat launch and the road that runs parallel to the river, south. The idea is to utilize rocks and other available material to extend the loop (about 50 yards south of the boat ramp and come back to the road that leads to the boat ramp). The desire is to stop vehicles from traveling along the riverbank.

Commissioner Drouin stated trimming would be done for trees along the road, trees could be cut in the parking area.

- Sklar – Vote to approve funds for Sklar signs for main entrance and trails

The County Forester spoke of how the trees falling by the riverbank re-root from their trunks. It helps to solidify the banks but does not do much for vegetation.

Vice Chair Boisvert commented he spoke with Scott Simpson who is a hobbyist who has a router machine that can do signs. He has volunteered to devote his labor if the Commission supplies the materials. He can accommodate signage up to 30" in size. He would like to do a sample piece.

The suggestion was made to establish a sign budget to address the needs at the various properties. Mr. Simpson works with wood (not pressure treated). Asked if the intent would be to route the wood and then paint the routed area, Vice Chair Boisvert stated his belief he would do that if the desire of the Commission. Asked what the cost would be for a typical sign, he stated it would depend on the cost of the material, e.g., cedar, oak, mahogany.

Were a sign budget created, the sub-committees could identify the need and have the signs made. Commissioner Rosati questioned the amount of funding that was desired for a sign budget and whether the Chair wished for a specific Commissioner to be authorized to sign off on expenditures.

Commissioner Kolb questioned the mechanism for establishing such a fund. Commissioner Rosati spoke of the need to identify an individual to track expenditures.

Vice Chair Boisvert suggested the Commission identify standards for signage, e.g., size, material, color, directional information. Signs could be attached to trees and on posts. Past efforts have been to place signage at junction points. Vice Chair Boisvert commented on the benefit of placing signs in areas where there are opportunities to cross from one trail to another.

Commissioner Perry commented on the posts (spruce) placed at trail junctions in Grater Woods. The lettering is on both sides going down the post. The Town (winter project) did the posts. Vice Chair Boisvert noted the existing posts are placed appropriately. Smaller signage would be best suited for the trails.

When discussing the need for signage at the entrance to the Sklar Waterfront Park, Commissioner Perry noted the Town made the signage for the HHNP. Vice Chair Boisvert will reach out to Lori Barrett, Operations Manager, PWD.

Chair Perkins suggested reaching out to Mr. Simpson to express the Commission's gratitude for his willingness to assist in this manner and arrange for a sample sign to be created, which will provide a better understanding of the cost of materials, etc.

Commissioner Rosati suggested the best approach may be to address signage on an as-needed basis rather than establishing a particular budget.

Vice Chair Boisvert volunteered to work with Mr. Simpson, acquire the necessary materials, and submit the invoice to the Commission for reimbursement. He will look to walk the back trails of Grater Woods to create a map of locations where signage would be helpful and suggest the appropriate size/lettering, etc.

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER ROSATI TO AUTHORIZE THE EXPENDITURE OF AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS (\$500.00) FOR THE PURCHASE OF MATERIALS NEEDED TO PRODUCE SIGNAGE FOR COMMISSION PROPERTIES. SOURCE OF FUNDING IS FUND 53

MOTION SECONDED BY CHAIR PERKINS

ON THE QUESTION

Commissioner Perry reiterated the need to reach out to the Town to see what assistance might be able to be provided.

MOTION CARRIED
6-0-0

Commissioner Rosati spoke of her efforts to produce a list of sub-committee members, term dates, etc.

Commissioner Rosati spoke of the need for a member of the Commission to take on the responsibility of updating and maintaining the website. It was suggested there may be a student at the high school who would be interested.

PRESENTATION OF THE MINUTES

Merrimack Conservation Commission. [September 20, 2021](#)

The following amendments were offered:

- Page 4, Line 28; replace “Commissioner Glenn” with “Commissioner Kolb”
- Page 6, Line 16; insert “keep” before “out”
- Page 7, Line 6; correct the spelling of “years”

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER ROSATI TO ACCEPT, AS AMENDED
MOTION SECONDED BY CHAIR PERKINS
MOTION CARRIED

5-0-1
Vice Chair Boisvert Abstained

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

The Commission had received a complaint regarding spray paint markings on trees at Wildcat Falls. Believing the markings may have been associated with the UNH Cooperative Extension identifying camera locations, Chair Perkins reached out to the graduate student to inquire.

The Annual Review with the Commission will take place at the October 14th meeting of the Town Council.

Vice Chair Boisvert spoke of an oak tree down on the Skyline trail. A chainsaw is needed to address it.

Commissioner Drouin stated the SEA Cadets would be conducting a clean-up project at the Sklar Waterfront Park on the 16th. It was suggested the project be coordinated with the PWD for assistance with trash removal. Commissioner Drouin requested he be provided with information on the seedling giveaway to be shared with the Hudson Conservation Commission.

He spoke of successful efforts to gain volunteers by posting the need on social media, and suggested those efforts be expanded. Commissioner Rosati spoke of the expanded audience reached when posting on the Merrimack Outdoors website. When posting on the positive forum, she makes the posting known so that those interested can view it.

Commissioner Drouin suggested filling an open alternate position on the Commission with a student from the high school.

Commissioner Drouin spoke of having received an email from Councilor Healy indicating the Town Manager is working on obtaining quotes for the work on the boat ramp at the Sklar Waterfront Park. The information will be included in the presentation of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), which will be made to the Town Council later this month.

ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION BY COMMISSIONER PERRY TO ADJOURN
MOTION SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER ROSATI
MOTION CARRIED**

6-0-0

The October 4, 2021, meeting of the Merrimack Conservation Commission was adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

Submitted by Dawn MacMillan