



Town of Merrimack, New Hampshire

Community Development Department

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Planning - Zoning - Economic Development - Conservation

MERRIMACK CONSERVATION COMMISSION DECEMBER 16, 2019 MEETING MINUTES

A regular meeting of the Merrimack Conservation Commission was held on Monday, December 16, 2019 at 6:30 p.m. in the Merrimack Memorial Conference Room.

Matt Caron, Chair, presided:

Members of the Commission Present: Steven Perkins, Vice Chair
Gina Rosati, Secretary
Michael Boisvert
Cynthia Glenn
Eric Starr, Alternate Member
Michael Swisher, Alternate member
Tim Tenhave, Alternate Member
Councilor Peter Albert

Members of the Commission Absent: Gage Perry

Also in Attendance:

Chair Caron designated Eric Starr to sit for Gage Perry.

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

PUBLIC HEARINGS - None

APPOINTMENTS - None

STATUTORY/ADVISORY BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS

- Review of the Grater Woods Site Walk from November 23, 2019

The Commission met at the cul-de-sac off Beebe Lane. A number of neighbors participated. The intent was to discuss hunting in the area of the neighborhood. Distances from dwellings were reviewed. No hunting blinds were noted. The walk provided the opportunity for the Commission to hear from the neighbors regarding their concerns. A few hunters were met along the way. The conversation included

how homeowners could mark their properties and how the Commission could assist. The largest takeaway was that property owners would post their property to ensure a clear boundary is visible so that hunters are aware. It is not believed there is any malicious activity occurring.

Commissioner Rosati added phone numbers will be clearly listed on the signage, and residents are aware, if necessary, the Police Department should be contacted.

Commissioner Boisvert commented, in areas where trails are surrounded by homes, there may come a point where the Commission has to take some additional action to ensure safety.

Chair Caron noted an inquiry was made of the Police Department regarding the number of calls received on this issue. In 2019, from the areas of Beebe Lane and Colman Path, there were none. Commissioner Boisvert noted the Police have been contacted in the past and have responded. It likely was prior to 2019 when an individual was found target shooting in the pond.

Chair Caron commented it was a very good meeting, and he believes the neighbors appreciated the Commission coming out.

Commissioner Starr spoke of having found a hunting blind after the walk. It was in legal territory although close to the 300' boundary behind 28 or 30 Beebe Lane (about 25' from the private property boundary and 50' from the 300' boundary). Although within legal limits, it is easy to imagine the sound would appear to be within the property range.

He took measurements from the beaver pond, where he assumes most of the duck hunting occurs. He does not believe it poses much of a threat to people in terms of shrapnel or pellets coming down. The distance is too far. The typical shotgun used for duck hunting has an effective range of 100-150 meters. Any spot on the pond that would be facing towards a structure/property would be about 600 meters. He was uncertain if bow hunting is permitted on the pond, and was informed it is. That could pose a safety issue.

Commissioner Starr spoke of having come across a game camera (near the hunting blind facing private property). Asked for additional information on the location of the hunting blind, he indicated it to have been on the northern side of the trail; facing towards the park.

Asked if the Commission would be taking any action, Chair Caron stated his belief the Commission was able to answer all of the questions of those who participated. There were no requests made by the public. He believes the education provided was helpful.

An email was received; however had not been seen by all. Commissioner Starr stated the gist of the message was a request for the area around beaver pond (northern top two parcels of Grater Woods) to restrict hunting. Commissioner Starr questioned the ability of the Commission to take such action, if desired, and whether the parcels are owned by the Town. Councilor Albert stated that to be an action that would be required to be approved by the Town Council.

Commissioner Boisvert stated his belief the neighbors would like to see more done, but they understand there is only so much the Commission can do.

Commissioner Rosati commented from what she is gathering from Ray Green, Commissioner, New Hampshire Fish & Game (Hillsborough County), he would like to discuss the issue. He will bring an

additional individual along with him to the January meeting, and believes the questions of the Commission will be able to be addressed.

Councilor Albert suggested were postings erected around Beebe Lane, the result may be moving the activity to another neighborhood. He is satisfied with the efforts to date, and would like to see if posting and the proactive behavior of the neighborhood will have a positive impact. The primary issue is duck hunting season, which has ended.

Commissioner Tenhave commented on the work being done with regard to the updating of Chapter 111. He has not pushed to get towards the Town Council until believing this subject has been concluded. He questioned if the Commission has concluded its action on this matter or if it would be on hold until following the January meeting with the Commissioner of New Hampshire Fish & Game.

Chair Caron suggested the Commission move forward with Chapter 111 updates and the discussion with the Commissioner of NH Fish & Game in January with the knowledge that residents will have the opportunity to attend multiple public hearings that will be conducted by the Town Council during which they could voice their desire for a restriction on hunting. He would not want to see the work on the update held up. Commissioner Tenhave commented on it being budget season, and the unlikely possibility the matter would be before the Town Council prior to January.

Councilor Albert spoke of the State regulating where hunting can and cannot occur on the properties, and his desire to discuss with NH Fish & Game the likelihood of prohibiting hunting in some of the busiest areas/properties.

- Discuss possible seedling choices for the 2020 giveaway

Commissioner Perry has indicated a desire to continue spearheading this activity. Chair Caron suggested information gathered at the last event regarding which items went the quickest and which had a quantity remaining be provided to Commissioner Perry. Chair Caron and Commissioners Rosati and Glenn will work to provide the information.

It is anticipated a draft list will be discussed at the next meeting.

OLD BUSINESS - None

OTHER BUSINESS

1. Discussion on communications or correspondence received concerning regulated Commission activities and any issues concerning Commission managed lands.

Commissioner Tenhave suggested the January agenda include a discussion of the upcoming Aquatic Resource Mitigation (ARM) Fund application submittal, and that a member of the Commission contact GZA GeoEnvironmental with regard to the report they are preparing. These efforts go hand in hand.

Commissioner Swisher noted Jeff Littleton, Ecologist, Moosewood Ecological, LLC., had mentioned committing to dates for future walks.

2. Sub-Committee Updates

Wildcat Falls

Commissioner Rosati spoke of needing to inform the Town Council, Denise Roy, Chief, Merrimack Police Department, and Town Manager Eileen Cabanel of the intent to conduct the Moonlight Snowshoe Walk on January 9th.

Grater Woods

Chair Caron spoke of having groomed areas in Grater Woods. The next meeting of the sub-committee is scheduled for February.

Horse Hill Nature Preserve (HHNP)

The sub-committee met on December 9th. Erecting of temporary signage relative to prohibiting leaf blowing was discussed. There is disagreement over whether leaf blowing is helpful. The consensus reached was that signage will be erected next year. Asked what the purpose of blowing may have been, Commissioner Swisher stated his belief some do it to see the trail better or to avoid slipping (those traversing on foot and by bicycle).

From an ecological perspective, there are many reasons not to have such an activity occur, e.g., erosion.

Councilor Albert commented he had not realized the issue of erosion until participating in the walk. He suggested signage include a brief explanation of why leaf blowing would be restricted.

Chair Caron stated he is against it unless the right person is operating the blower. Although he has a blower, when dealing with the trails, he uses a rake. Typically, the reason for removing leaves is to get water off certain areas of the trail. It is not for the removal of leaves from the entire trail/marketing the trail. Depending on the trail, that could result in erosion. If having a trail that is rarely used that has grasses, etc. leaf blowing might help, but we don't have those type of trails in Merrimack.

Chair Caron commented it is likely the individual is the same one the Commission came across on the morning of its yearly walk of the Wasserman Conservation Area, and suggested a conversation may be an easy way to resolve the issue.

Commissioner Swisher spoke of bridge repair that was done noting the belief the damage was caused by a horse. The sub-committee has engaged in discussion of how to address horses and whether it is a growing problem. It is believed there are stables on all three roads that border the HHNP. Mark Gagnon came out to speak at the meeting, and made note he has an interest in considering joining the sub-committee. He shared concerns about horse owners not cleaning up after their animals. Chair Caron spoke of an active group on Facebook that posts about being in the HHNP on their horses frequently.

Commissioner Swisher commented the discussion around bridges was whether, when repairing bridges, they should be engineered to a greater degree to allow for that weight. Chair Caron stated the multiplier to be significant. Commissioner Tenhave stated it to be a point load; could be 500-700 lbs. each time one hoof goes down. Chair Caron noted the three bridges that were constructed in Grater Woods to withstand horses; lower Blodgett Hill, Loop over by the Watson lookout, and the one by the archery club on the loop. Commissioner Swisher stated all three to have been engineered to a higher degree. The one that was repaired is on the far northeastern corner of the property.

The sub-committee will inventory every bridge in the spring as there is interest in noting the measurements of decking on the bridges and understanding whether a bridge could withstand the weight of horses.

A few people noted campers in the HHNP/Amherst Road parking lot, and wondered if they were parked overnight. Commissioner Tenhave stated there to have been an RV parked there for two nights. It appeared it may have been an instance of a visitor needing a place to park the RV. The parking lot was not busy during that time, and he does not think it had any impact on anything. He remarked if we could help someone out so that their family could enjoy a few days up here, he thinks it to be a good thing.

The next meeting of the sub-committee is scheduled for February 3rd at 6:30 p.m. in the Merrimack Memorial Conference Room.

Commissioner Glenn requested she be provided with 2020 meeting dates for the sub-committees so that they can be posted to the calendar. Chair Caron stated his belief the calendar is awaiting approval by the individual sub-committees, and should be distributed once finalized.

There being no objection, the Commission went out of the regular order of business.

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Starr spoke of the Conservation Ranger position. He has begun creating a new position/description for a Conservation Land Manager using the best parts of the position description provided for the Conservation Ranger. He may be prepared to discuss this further at the January meeting.

It was noted any information distributed for review would be noted and included in the next meeting and minutes.

Councilor Albert noted the Town Council has begun the budget process. The Town Manager has provided her budget presentation. As there is needed growth, there will be challenges.

The Union Leader had an article on the pros and cons of the use of Ebikes on State land, which noted the Governor's support of such use.

Commissioner Swisher commented on the variety of uses of the properties during the winter months, and encouraged residents to enjoy them.

Chair Caron spoke of a planned meeting between the Town Manager, Police Chief, and he and Councilor Albert, which was postponed. He is hopeful it will occur prior to the conclusion of the discussion on the proposed budget. Councilor Albert stated his belief the position of the Town Manager was that she would like to see the Commission make an investment into the Conservation Ranger position rather than the Town taking on 100% of the cost from inception.

Chair Caron noted the Town Manager's Office is looking to the Commission for its Annual Report submission. Commissioner Rosati indicated she has gathered the information and could forward it to the Chair.

The Commission returned to the regular order of business.

PRESENTATION OF THE MINUTES

Merrimack Conservation Commission. [November 18, 2019](#)

The following amendments were offered:

- Page 1, Line 30; “Husband” should be lower case
- Page 2, Line 2; replace “look”: with “looking”
- Page 2, Line 38; move the “)” to follow “female”
- Page 3, Lines 3 and 19; correct the spelling of “Rufous-Sided Towhee”
- Page 6, Line 14; “100” should be corrected to read “100 yards”
- Page 7, Line 45; insert “Trail” following “Rock”
- Page 9, Line 32; correct the spelling of “White-Nose Syndrome”

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER ROSATI TO ACCEPT, AS AMENDED
MOTION SECONDED BY VICE CHAIR PERKINS
MOTION CARRIED
7-0-0

Merrimack Conservation Commission – **off-site** November 23, 2019

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER BOISVERT TO ACCEPT, AS PRESENTED
MOTION SECONDED BY VICE CHAIR PERKINS
MOTION CARRIED
6-0-1
Councilor Albert Abstained

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER BOISVERT TO ADJOURN
MOTION SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER GLENN
MOTION CARRIED
7-0-0

The December 16, 2019 meeting of the Merrimack Conservation Commission was adjourned at 7:26 p.m.

Submitted by Dawn MacMillan