

Exeter Conservation Commission

Draft Minutes

Nowak Room, Exeter Town Offices

May 10, 2011

Call Meeting to Order

Chairman Robert Aldrich called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town Offices. Members present were Kevin Keaveney, Margaret Matick, Peter Richardson, Virginia Raub, Kristen Murphy, Natural Resource Planner, and Robert Aldrich, Chairman.

Following the introduction of members, the Chairman asked for public comment. There were no comments at this time.

Action Items

1. Exeter Trail Race (*Silverberg, Fahnestock*)

The application for the Exeter Trail Race to be held in the Henderson Swasey/Oaklands Town Forest was presented by Sarah Silverberg and Ri Fahnestock. The event would take place on Sunday, June 12 at 10:00 a.m., and will have around 75 or more participants. This is the third year for the Exeter Trail Race and it continues to gain popularity with each year. The race will start at Commerce Way near the Lantern Factory and will be both 4 and 10 miles long. Maps will be provided and all ages are welcome. The Commission discussed the event and encouraged the public to attend. Virginia Raub moved to approve the application for the Exeter Trail Race, Margaret Matick seconded: Vote unanimous.

Kristen Murphy explained that Mr. Fahnestock has helped the Conservation Commission to construct and install several sign posts for the Conservation Properties. The Board thanked Mr. Fahnestock for the work he is completing for the Town.

2. Property Boundary Marking (*Peter Richardson*)

Peter Richardson addressed the Board with a proposal on the responsibility and necessary actions required by the Conservation Commission on attaining and marking new conservation properties. Due to the large number of properties that currently exist, many are not given the necessary attention for proper marking. Mr. Richardson proposed the following actions be taken:

1. Designation for the Town Forest properties needs to be established.
2. New properties need to require early planning. Before accepting a property, the Board needs to acquire the following: a current survey, marked witness trees at all major corners, inspection by a Town Representative, baseline documentation, and a management plan to be developed by the Conservation Commission.

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3. Complete the following work at Raynes Farm: define the Commission's role with the property, finish the trail and construction of the bridge, check the boundaries, and remove necessary invasives.

Kristen Murphy defined several stewardship guidelines for the Conservation Commission:

1. Obtain accurate land records
2. Locate and identify survey markers, corners, and boundary lines. When two properties are adjacent, only mark the outer boundary.
3. Develop uses on the property through researching the Natural Resource Inventory, deed restrictions, and land conditions while also monitor for future development.
4. Monitor for infractions of the deed restrictions

Mr. Richardson began a discussion concerning the most practical and appropriate methods to mark property boundaries, suggesting that the Board agree upon one process to use for all properties. Due to the impermanent nature of tying flags around trees, Mr. Richardson suggested painting three witness trees within three feet of monuments in order to simplify the process of finding boundary markings. Another proposal was made to clear the boundary lines at least within 10 feet of the line in order to allow for easier travel, as well as placing a disk where boundaries meet adjacent lots or trails to better inform neighboring owners of the actual property boundaries. The Board discussed the issues of necessary funding for monitoring and marking a property, pointing out that with a better-defined boundary, the Conservation Commission can save many hours spent in monitoring the property. After further discussion, the Board agreed upon completing the following actions before acquiring and maintaining a property:

1. Locate all major corners of the property.
2. Paint witness trees at property monuments.
3. Clear the line between each monument.
4. Install disks between adjacent lots and trail/road crossings.

Robert Aldrich suggested that the Board start at the Raynes property and make a commitment to complete an additional four or five properties before the end of the year. The Board began a conversation concerning the extent of line clearing necessary to provide adequate access. It was agreed to remove tree whips under two inches in diameter and maintain a visible path. Mr. Aldrich brought up the topic of missing boundary markers, stating that many will need to be reinstalled throughout existing conservation lands. In response to this, Ms. Murphy explained that by using the process outlined above, it will be far easier to find property markers that have been misplaced and will help to input the information into the GPS system for future maintenance. After discussing which color to use for painting witness trees, the Board agreed to use a bright, neon yellow. Peter Richardson made the suggestion to create a focus group which would begin the discussion of these needs in more detail.

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Peter Richardson moved that the Conservation Commission adhere to the following procedure for existing and future Conservation lands: Locate all major property corners, paint witness trees with a yellow paint, clear the boundary lines, and use disks, at least one per lot and trail/road crossings and power lines, starting with the properties surrounding Raynes Farm sometime this summer. Virginia Raub seconded: Vote unanimous.

Peter Richardson suggested that the Board should begin its work as soon as next week and identify the focus group to begin the discussion. Volunteers for the group include Kristen Murphy, Margaret Matick, Virginia Raub, Peter Richardson, and possibly Carlos Guindon. Kevin Keaveney volunteered to help out on the weekends pending any scheduling conflicts.

A discussion ensued concerning the necessary funds to hire a surveyor for locating missing and existing boundaries. Mr. Richardson recommended an estimated \$10,000 to be added to the budget in order to accomplish all necessary items. Robert Aldrich agreed to speak on the subject with the Board of Selectmen at the next meeting, suggesting that ECC members eventually create a Stewardship Monitoring Proposal to support the request.

3. Use of Metal Detectors at Raynes Farm

Kristen Murphy stated that she has received two reports of people using metal detectors on the Raynes Property. The deed currently does not mention the use of metal detectors, however there may be concerns with someone uncovering any historic items. Ms. Murphy explained that the Board needs to take a position on the issue in order to figure out what is best for the Town. A discussion followed amongst the Board suggesting the following options: prohibit the use of metal detectors, prohibit the removal of specific artifacts (i.e. bottles, arrowheads, etc.), or install a sign discouraging the removal of any item on the property. The Board agreed to consider the topic in more depth for the following month. Ms. Murphy agreed to contact LCHIP (Land and Community Heritage Program) and the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions for suggestions.

4. Jolly Rand Trail Management

Peter Richardson explained that for five years, the staff and residents of RiverWoods Community have been properly maintaining the Jolly Rand Trail and are still interested in continuing the work. Mr. Richardson suggested the Conservation Commission institutionalize RiverWoods to officially take on maintenance of the trail. Currently the trail is a town trail but is not under the responsibility of the Conservation Commission. The Parks and Recreation Department has offered an "adopt-a-trail" program, where a business or person can sponsor the maintenance for a piece of land.

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Robert Aldrich suggested using this program in order to help maintain this trail along with other trails throughout the Town. Kristen Murphy suggested organizing clean-up days for specific trails with interested groups that use the spaces. Mr. Aldrich offered to look into additional options for the following month to see additional options and feasibility.

Follow-Up Items

1. Timberland Trail Project Update

A total of 50 volunteers attended the Timberland Trails Day to complete work along the Timberland Trail. Work completed includes the following: soften a curve in the trail, improve some wet sections, replace trail boards, and install an internal trail post. Previously, Bob Kelly had come before the Conservation Commission and was approved for these modifications. The project had a great turn out and was very successful. Kristen Murphy stated that Mr. Kelly was contacted by Timberland this year to see if we would be hosting another trail day. The Board thanked Mr. Kelly for organizing the event and all of the volunteers that worked to complete these improvements.

2. PEA Community Action Day Update

Peter Richardson and Kristen Murphy took two groups of students from the Phillips Exeter Academy out to the Morrisette property to do a presentation on invasive species. Ms. Murphy's focus was to understand the density and amount of invasive species within the property. It was discovered that the plants have been fairly well distributed throughout the entire property and should be removed in order to prevent excessive spreading. Ms. Murphy stated that this was the first time she has completed an educational event for the PEA Community Action Day and she is interested in continuing events like this again in the future.

Mr. Richardson took his group of six students and a faculty member to help remove honeysuckle and clear 150 feet of property line. The Board thanked the students and volunteers for their work and hope to repeat the projects again next year. It was agreed that the Board should further discuss the extent of work needed for the removal of invasive species. Mr. Richardson suggested finding a group of volunteers that would help to complete simple projects throughout the year. Ms. Murphy suggested to also keep track of volunteer hours in order to help apply for grant dollars.

3. Volunteer Fair Update

Both Virginia Raub and Margaret Matick helped to operate the Conservation Commission booth for the Volunteer Fair. Ms. Raub stated that although there was not much traffic due to the weather, there was a lot of interested individuals who stopped by the booth to watch a presentation Kristen Murphy had compiled. The presentation

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consisted of a collection of photos which showed the conservation lands and trails throughout the Town. There were two people that showed interest in becoming members. Robert Aldrich suggested setting up another booth for volunteer members and Conservation Commission members during the Town Election on July 12 and the Deliberative Session on June 6.

Regular Business

1. Treasurer's Report

The Board discussed the details of the Treasurer's Report and Mr. Aldrich agreed to speak with the Town Treasurer concerning the consolidation of the three Conservation Commission accounts.

2. Approval of Minutes: April 5, 2010

Robert Aldrich stated that there were no minutes to approve.

3. Natural Resources Planner's Report

Kristen Murphy announced that New Hampshire Fish and Game is offering homeowners the chance to request and acquire an unlimited number of various sign types. The complete list is available online.

After speaking with Don Clement, Ms. Murphy was informed that the official designation for the Henderson-Swasey Town Forest does exist, however, which properties were included in this designation still need to be researched.

Kristen Murphy stated that she attended an early detector's training focusing on detecting invasive insects. The goal of the training is to help communities identify and report invasive insects and plants that may appear in their town. One example of this is the Asian longhorn beetle which has recently become a serious issue in Massachusetts. This invasive insect has decimated thousands of trees of all types without providing much evidence of its damage. Ms. Murphy requested that the people within the Town of Exeter keep an eye out for its presence in order to prevent infection.

Ms. Murphy also attended a vernal pool training session, which provides guidance on how to present the subject of vernal pools to the public. After the training, Ms. Murphy presented the topic to a class of Exeter High School students during a fieldtrip. The presentation consisted of visiting the Conservation Easement on the school property and discussing vernal pools and their inhabitants on site. The Exeter High School is interested in continuing the educational connection between the Conservation Commission and the students.

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Through this connection, Kristen Murphy has had a student from the Seacoast School of Technology shadowing her throughout the week to better understand the position of Natural Resource Planner.

Kristen Murphy stated that the Planning Board has recently seen an increase in applications for Conditional Use Permits impacting wetland buffers. Ms. Murphy stated that she has three applications available for the Board to view for the upcoming Planning Board meeting on May 12. The first is an application by Rollinsford Associates for two parcels off of Portsmouth Ave involving a drive-thru retail space and an office space. The second application is for a residential driveway on 2 Beechhill Extension. Lastly, the third is for a BoatofGarten on Industrial Drive for expanding the building footprint.

The Department of Environmental Safety has recently published a Storm Water Management Guide for homeowners. The guide is easy to read and very well documented to help users understand how to infiltrate water runoff within their home. A link will be provided through the Town of Exeter's website to help obtain this guide.

4. Other Business

Peter Richardson, Maggie Matick, and Virginia Raub helped to transport and pack trees for the Spring Tree event at the Lincoln Street School. Although this year the trees are only small saplings, the demonstration by Peter Waltz went very well.

Kristen Murphy announced the following training available throughout the month:

- Bird walk in Durham, May 11, 2011 from 7:45 - 9:00 a.m.
- Vernal pool walk presented by Patrick Seacamp and sponsored by ERLAC (Exeter River Local Advisory Committee) and the Conservation Commission at 9:00 a.m. on May 14, 2011. Children welcome.
- Best management practices for storm water management by the Storm Water Center on May 20, 2011.
- Epping floodplain pool ecology walk on May 21, 2011 by Mark West.
- Beginner bird walk on the Sweet Trail in Durham on May 22, 2011.
- Great Bay Discovery Center invasives presentation by Doug Sican on May 31, 2011 from 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.
- New Hampshire Culverts program training workshop on July 1, 2011. Includes introductory training for hosting field walks and field trip presentations from 10:00 to 2:00 a.m.

The Board began a discussion for Trails Day on June 4, 2011, deciding which trails would be the best locations for the event. It was agreed that in order to better organize the event, the best location would be to use the Oaklands property. The Board agreed to advertise for the event at the local schools, on Channel 22, online, and the local newspaper.

5. Next Meeting: Date and Agenda Items

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The following Conservation Commission meeting will occur on June 14, 2011. Robert Aldrich stated that the July meeting will either be cancelled or moved to another date and will be decided at a later time. Mr. Aldrich also announced that a new member will be joining the Board in June.

Peter Richardson moved to adjourn the meeting, Virginia Raub seconded.

Chairman Robert Aldrich adjourned the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gillian Baresich
Recording Secretary