

**Exeter Conservation Commission
October 14, 2014**

Call to Order

Chairman Jay Gregoire recalled the meeting to order at 7:00 pm in the Nowak Room of the Town Office building.

Member Introduction:

Don Briselden, Carlos Guindon, Pete Richardson, Bill Campbell, Ginny Raub, Board of Selectman representative, Anne Surman and Natural Resource Planner, Kristen Murphy.

Action Item

1. Minimum Impact Expedited Wetland Permit for the “in kind” replacement of the seawall associated with the Phillips Wharf Condominium Association at 137R Water Street, Exeter (Tax Map 72, Lot 20) within the Tidal Buffer Zone.

Members were provided copies of the Expedited Wetland Permit Application as prepared by Mr. Steven Riker, a NH Certified Wetland Scientist, of Sandpiper Environmental Services, LLC. The application requests to permit 82 sq. ft. of permanent and 700 sq. ft. of temporary construction impacts within the previously developed 100’ Tidal Buffer Zone. Photographs of the present condition of the wall were also distributed to the members.

Mr. Riker introduced Mr. Rick Hartman who would be doing the on-site construction. Referencing the construction plan, he explained the existing stone would be removed down to the footing which he felt was strong. The work would be done at low tide and all materials would be removed from site. A silt barrier would be put in place to prevent any exfiltration of material behind the wall. The placement of the new stones would be tilted back to counteract the forces of gravity. He did ascertain the new wall would be the same height as present wall and there was no provision to modify for anticipated higher tides.

The Chair reviewed the options for this application. By voting to accept, the Commission waives the right to intervene; by voting against (the application) the applicant would need to complete the more extensive wetland permit. Mr. Campbell moved to approve the Expedited Wetland Permit application; seconded by Mr. Briselden. Motion carried with Mr. Richardson opposed.

2. Approval of Minutes.
Mr. Gregoire asked for the change of a road name stated under the Trails report. Mr. Richardson moved to accept minutes with correction; seconded by Mr. Guindon. Motion carried with Ms. Surman and Ms. Raub abstaining as they were not present for that meeting.
3. Treasurer’s Report

Ms. Raub, Treasurer, distributed copies of the financial report. The dollar amounts listed were explained and discussed. Mr. Guindon moved to accept the Treasurer's report; seconded by Mr. Campbell. Motion carried.

4. Expenditure requests

A quote of \$350.00 was received for the cleaning of the Raynes Barn by the Yeti Landcare Co. The owner, Mr. Keith Whitehouse, is an Exeter resident and trail user and wanted to help the Commission with this task. With clarification on the Town's bidding procedure, Mr. Gregoire felt a certificate of insurance was needed to be provided before accepting the bid.

Mr. Campbell moved to approve up to \$350.00 to Yeti Landcare Services for the cleaning of the Raynes Barn. The Chair wished to add *with proof of general liability insurance* to the motion which Mr. Campbell accepted. Motion seconded by Mr. Briselden. Motion carried

Ms. Murphy stated the Raynes barn door is being constructed by the students at the Seacoast School of Technology (SST) but because of extenuating circumstances it was not able to be completed last year. The funds were approved in the 2013-14 budget and carried over to the current budget. Having received an invoice for purchase of the lumber it appears to be underway but the students will not be able to install. Mr. Kevin Smart of DPW stated a contractor will be needed to install the door.

Recognizing a member of the public was in the audience The Chair asked if there was any public comment at this time. There being none, the Chair entertained a motion to close the public meeting and enter into a non-public work session. Ms. Surman so moved; seconded by Mr. Richardson. Motion carried.

Public meeting adjourned at 7:40 pm.

Work Session

1. Timber harvest

Mr. Briselden spoke of the forest management plan the Commission had prepared by forester Charlie Moreno some of years ago, but for a number of circumstances it has not gone forward. He asked if the Commission wants to commit to a winter of 2015 harvest and what are the steps necessary to accomplish this; nothing to commit to at this meeting. Perhaps a meeting should take place with Commission members, Ms. Murphy and Mr. Moreno and relay the ECC is committed to the project for winter of 2015. And what is it we need to do make it happen; does plan need to be refreshed. Mr. Guindon, Mr. Briselden and Mr. Richardson expressed a willingness to be included in such meeting.

There is no need to budget monies in next year's account but pretreating the invasive plant species in the area and widening the existing logging road for better access to the 30 designated acres might need to be considered/included.

It was acknowledged this will be a very visible project and public education will be necessary to advise the public when and why the logging project is being done.

2. Open Space Committee (OSC)

Mr. Briselden noted a vote was taken several months ago to re-activate the Open Space Committee but did not proceed to solicit members. He conceded it probably occupied a lower priority with the Commission but he would like to keep it visible. He explained this is unlike the former OSC when it was a committee appointed by the BOS to implement the spending of the three million dollars approved for land acquisition. This group is to focus more on stewardship and its members need not be members of the Commission; just have an interest in helping to maintain the Town's natural resources.

Along with posting notices on ECC page on Town website, and Facebook page, Ms. Surman suggested bringing signup sheets to public forums such as the Fall Chili Fest.

3. Raynes Farm Management Plan (RFMP)

Ms. Murphy summarized the management plan for the property is in place, but with the Town voters approving the new roofing and future cleaning of the barn perhaps with this renewed interest in the barn it might be the time to revisit the goals for barn and schedule a meeting of the Raynes Barn Stewardship Committee.

Mr. Briselden stated the original plan was drawn up in 2007 after some major work was done to barn structure and there remains other structural work. But of importance is what the vision for the uses of the barn is in the coming years so we are able to move in that direction. Mr. Briselden suggested members receive a copy of the 2007 plan, noting what has been done since it last updated in 2011 and submit suggestions. The MP is for the area as a whole but focuses on the barn.

Mr. Guindon spoke of the old railroad bed on site which is now incorporated into the trail system; would like to see it incorporated into the history of the site. He questioned if it is worth approaching railroad company to release the rights to the Town.

Nate Merrill, the tenant farmer at Raynes, told Ms. Murphy of a program the Stratham Heritage Commission is hosting in February. A noted historian on New England barns will be the speaker and suggested the Exeter Heritage Commission partner with the Stratham group on this event and include photos of the Raynes and other town barns to highlight for the event. Ms. Murphy advised the Exeter Heritage Commission and is unsure who should pursue: ConCom or Heritage group.

Mr. Richardson spoke on seeking funding from outside sources; feels more than Ms. Murphy should be involved. He had hoped he could do more; invited others to be of assistance to him and Ms. Murphy. Going forward, Ms. Murphy added she would

perhaps like a work session to seek input and dollar amounts when preparing the next year's budget.

4. Trail Issues

Un-permitted wetland crossings

One issue facing the Commission is the un-permitted wetland crossings on the red trail off of the Watson entrance in the Oakland Town Forest. Going back, these crossings were to be removed by the developer when the housing development was in the planning process but was not. They have been there for some time and calls are now being received on their safety. Mr. Gregoire was advised one has been stabilized by a trail user, but the question remains; should they be removed because of the wetlands. Because they are heavily used, do we acknowledge the critical link and hire a consultant to go through the permitting process. Ms. Murphy noted because they are crossing a prime wetland the process would be more involved going through a DES permitting process

Research determined DES required the bridges come out and subsequently the Planning Board approval referenced compliance with the DES recommendations. Discussion on how do you undo a Planning Board decision and what would be the consequences of removal. If removed, the bikers might need to find alternate routes but felt the bridges would re-appear. Mr. Briselden added because of all the trail work the bikers have done in the past and their support in acquiring the Elliot property there is the need to find that balance.

Mr. Guindon felt the process of permitting should be explored; what is procedure and cost and then make a decision. He is very familiar with that area and would want to know if it can be done and not impact the wetlands.

Mr. Briselden summarized from the discussion the steps needed for resolution; to be determined is who bears the expense; may eventually be the developer if ordered to remove.

Trail patrols

Mr. Gregoire spoke of Jason Fritz, an Exeter fire fighter and president of the New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA) patrol group, coming to the Commission to speak on an arrangement for their group to patrol the trails in the Town Forest noting obstacles and/or safety concerns on the trails. They will also be equipped to help any trail user in need of assistance. They in turn will relay any safety issues back to the Trails Committee for action if needed.

There is also the potential for them to GPS the trails and provide feedback to import into one global GPS system and that in turn to be given to Town emergency responders if needed. Mr. Gregoire, from personal experience, suggested using the Strava app that tracks running and cycling experiences and data from a GPS device.

Trail blazing

Mr. Gregoire reported he has a group of volunteers ready to do blaze work in the Oaklands. The technique was discussed and Mr. Briselden suggested, if possible, using fluorescent/reflective paint to prevent night users from adding their own markings.

Other trails in need of attention

Mr. Richardson spoke of the work he recently did at the entrance to the Morrisette property going in from the SST parking lot. It was overgrown and the invasive, bittersweet, is very prevalent.

Ms. Murphy reported on the Eagle Scout project to build bridges/connectors into the Morrisette property from the Court St./skateboard entrance. She met with the Scout following the completion of the project but failed to convey her disappointment at the results. The question raised is how are we, the Commission, to handle such projects as this is not the first experience. It is apparent there is guidance needed and that the scout leaders are often not always able to provide. But this is not the responsibility of the Commission. It was agreed there is the need to be more explicit in future projects in letting the scout and the leaders know the procedure. Although the ECC is very appreciative of the time and effort that goes into a project, but if the final project is not what was presented and approved and does not meet the needs of the Commission there can't be a final letter of approval. For this project, a letter will be sent to the scout stating based on feedback from the ECC members, the Commission is not ready to approve the project.

Mr. Briselden wished to share what he has observed recently and that is the change in width in what used to be a "trail" that now has grown in width to become a "street"; all in the span from the spring to this fall. It appears it is from increased usage and perhaps other users are not in tune with trail protocol. It was suggested the brush from the logging project be used to close off some of the braided trails and allowed to re-vegetate.

Next meeting will be the third Tuesday of the month, November 18, 2010.

With no further business meeting was closed at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ginny Raub
Secretary