

CONSERVATION COMMISSION
JANUARY 10, 2017
As Finalized at the 2-14-17 Meeting

Call to Order:

Acting Chair Bill Campbell called the session to order at 7:02 pm.

1. Introduction of Members Present

The Chair introduced David O’Hearn, Alyson Eberhardt, Virginia Raub, Bill Campbell, Vice Chair/Acting Chair, Todd Piskovitz, Andrew Koff and Anne Surman, BOS Representative.

Also present were Kristen Murphy, Natural Resources Planner, and David Pancoast, Recording Secretary. Members of the public were present as well.

2. Public Comments

Mark Damsell of 10 Newfields Road. He has lived in Exeter his entire life, he lives near Swasey Parkway. His younger daughter wanted to go for a hike and they took their puppy with them. His daughter slipped on ice in the parking lot and fell in some dog poo. On the hike, there was dog poop everywhere. He bagged his dog’s poo. This situation is unacceptable. He requested immediate action: the signs at the trail heads are too small. [He passed out some pictures he had taken that day.] [Andrew Koff arrived at 7:06 pm] The Chair said a board member had expressed similar concerns as have others. It is a big problem.

Mr. Damsell said the signs are way too small. It is disgusting to say the least. The Chair said the Board would discuss this further at another time.

Action Items:

**1. Climate Risk in the Seacoast (C-Rise) Report
Overview and Feedback Opportunity (Julie LaBranche, RPC)**

Ms. LaBranche said the Commission has had the opportunity to review the maps she had presented and she was here tonight to get input. They are trying to wrap up the project by the end of the month. She is meeting with

BOS on 30th, so there is time beyond tonight to comment. [She passed out another handout- natural resources section with recommendations.] She indicated municipal recommendations and she would like Commission comments on them. The draft report is broad based in scope. It has both immediate actions and short term actions to take to ease flood issues over time. Natural resource impacts are seen more in the long term, less in the short term, though possible.

Ms. Raub asked about Tier 1, 2 and 3 habitats. Ms. LaBranche reported that Tier 1 is highest value habitat. That is in the wildlife action plan. They are scored for rarity and importance. There are distinct areas in towns that fit the criteria. Habitats are not the same but are ranked that way. Ms. Eberhardt asked about tidal flows and directional aspects. Ms. LaBranche said that the maps are being updated. Some areas are not doing well hydraulically, but others are doing well.

Mr. Campbell said he had some comments. Sea level rise of 1.7 ft would affect 7.7 acres of land overall. The new wastewater treatment plant is close to the river, and he was concerned about effects there. Ms. LaBranche said that at that site it would affect about an acre of land at 6.3 foot sea level rise, about an acre at 4 foot rise during flex storm events and over an acre and a half at. The design could withstand flood increases over time.

Ms. Murphy said that water works land is at Clemson Pond, not the wastewater plant. Storm surge affects Clemson Pond, not the waste water plant. Ms. LaBranche went over sea level rise areas at different levels of impact.

Ms. Murphy asked if they have anything that shows the actual acreage that will be affected. She is interested in non-conservation land impacts. There was discussion on this aspect of the data.

Mr. Campbell asked where the figure of 4257 acres comes from on page six of the report? She said it includes wet resources and wetlands. He thought that number was too high. Phillips Exeter Academy's land is not protected. If pull that out, comes to about 2700 acres. Fish and Game has some

protected land in Exeter. He thought 31% is a little high. Exeter uses 16,387 acre figure. Kristen said that's the whole town without removing water resources from the calculation. Ms. LaBranche said she would check on the figures and get back to them. Ms. Murphy accentuated that the Town gets point credits for protecting flood plain lands, which it has done.

There was discussion on the marshes and water levels. Low marsh that is emergent at low tide will become inundated with water at all times. High marsh will shift to emergent. There has been a ten inch sea level rise over the past 100 years. There is a lot of study done on the marshes' ability to keep pace with sea level rise.

Ms. Eberhardt said that marshes are degrading, whether it's sea level rise or not is an issue. She has great concerns about the possible effects on Swasey Park, which was built on salt marsh. Rip rap and walls won't accommodate migration of salt marsh, so that area isn't well poised there for the future. There is choking out of the marsh already, north of Rte 101. There is freshwater influx too. Western side of the Squamscott River is of concern, need to be looking at it. Mr. Campbell said most of the land is protected there, except the railroad and another piece.

Ms. Raub asked about Pg 6 of the report and it seems to reflect that the CAPE report remains a draft report and has not been finalized. Ms. Murphy said it's important to acknowledge the concerns, even if the science is disputed, should be listed. Ms. LaBranche said that a caveat could be put in on it. There was discussion on this aspect of the report.

Ms. LaBranche said under the Issues and Considerations section of the report, she will add bullet points for identifying barriers to salt marsh migration and ways to enhance tidal flows. Ms. Eberhardt said NH Fish and Game had modeled salt marsh migration and sea level rise. That is called "SLAMM" modeling.

Ms. Eberhardt asked what they are looking for as feedback? Ms. LaBranche said that environmental and conservation issues of concern would be valuable. The more specific the better and recommendations for resolutions would be great. Ms. Eberhardt said that saltwater intrusion into

the Town's reservoir and aquifer impacts would be a huge concern. There was discussion on groundwater wells being affected by saltwater intrusion. Mr. Campbell suggested she meet with Planning Board as well, due to their Master Planning role currently underway. She is meeting with Town staff tomorrow on this and with the Master Plan consultants too. Inundation of private wells and of public water system will be included.

She closed by saying feel free to send questions, comments and such her way. They would like to issue a draft report in March if possible.

2. Correspondence:

The Chair took this matter out of order. Ms. Murphy said correspondence was received from the Exeter Snow Hounds, and their concerns about Conservation Easement at the Barker property. The date of receipt is unclear. The property off Beech Hill Road had a snowmobile trail through it but the Barkers, who are landowners, closed it to snowmobile access. Town Planner and Code Enforcement and Ms. Murphy went out to the Barker Easement and The Planner issued a letter to the Barkers about the condition of the Conservation Easement and some encroachments. She asked if they wanted to hear tonight from the Snow Hounds who are present.

Mr. Campbell said that he wanted to deal with it tonight. Tim Shepard, President of the Exeter Snow Hounds, was present and said that the snowmobile club in Town is the oldest in the state and one of the largest in the country as well. They do a lot of trail maintenance year round for all users. There has been a snowmobile trail through this property and the power lines since the 1950's. Not heavily traveled but only way to get around over there. Two years ago got a voice mail that trail no longer in use. Snow banks were plowed in front of the trail that night. They work with land groups and Fish and Game a lot, due to wanting to preserve the trails usage. The Conservation Easement is for everybody's use and they want to see it held up to what it's supposed to be.

Mr. Campbell said it had to be cleaned up by June. Ms. Murphy said the northern part of the property was subjected to a lot of dumping. Plan does

allow for agricultural uses subject to Commission approval. The owner has not indicated if she has had any change of mind about access. Mr. Campbell said he's not sure what the Commission can do, short of legal action.

Ms. Eberhardt said the Planner's letter explains her action is in violation of the Conservation Easement.

Mr. Piskovitz asked if there is more than signs preventing access. Mr. Shepard said the trail was moved away from the Barkers' house, as far as they could go. The trail has been going through the powerline since the 1950's.

Ms. Murphy said there is no physical barrier at this time blocking the powerline.

Ms. Surman asked if a written plan was received, which was due on January 6th. If there is access to the public, then it has to be all of the public, not just some folks. Mr. Campbell said he would talk to the Planner tomorrow. There was discussion on the language of the easement. Ms. Eberhardt said a snowmobile is a motorized vehicle and they are prohibited from the easement. The owners built two buildings there. Mrs. Barker wants to bring the property into compliance. Mr. Campbell said the Commission can't settle anything on it tonight, it needs more information and time.

Ms. Murphy said she is unsure of the details of the June deadline for cleanup.

3. Master Plan Interview Questions

The Chair discussed the questions that the Master Plan Steering Committee would like everyone to address were in the packets. There is an All Boards Meeting tomorrow night. He would like anyone who can go to come. Ms. Raub said the questions for tomorrow night at All Boards will be done within smaller groups. A statement is wanted from ConCom by Jan 31st. She thinks that she could submit something for tomorrow night's consideration.

Mr. Campbell suggested the group look at the questions and would like some input on them. Ms. Raub said the original Master Plan (“MP”) was done in 2002 and the residents’ comments were all included. This current Plan is an update with less detail than the original plan had. Some recommendations were pursued and one was to hire a Natural Resources Planner and they did that. Number one was a question on whether the Commission has considered the Master Plan when making decisions. Ms. Eberhardt said that some authority exists for refusing land offers if not manageable for it.

Mr. Campbell said that Chapter 7 was about assessing the natural resources and they’ve started doing that. Did do some signage and such. Ms. Murphy said that a lot of it is kudos for the Commission on its efforts. Ms. Eberhardt said a plug for Kristen is to have it all together. Ms. Murphy said that Sylvia did that work and it’s useful.

What are the available tools for the Commission’s work? Ms. Eberhardt said since this is not a regulatory board, her personal goal is to realize the Commission nevertheless has a stronger say than it may seem. Anything that deals with Climate Change and sea level rise is critical and fundamentally necessary. Needs to be in the MP. Sea level model is a tool for them to use to do that.

Mr. Campbell raised the matter of wetlands assessments. Ms. Surman said that the MP can be used as leverage in decisionmaking. Stormwater and non-point source discharges should be in the MP.

Ms. Eberhardt said that prioritizing living shorelines over built developments would be important. Also she said the pg 22 Education #1, ConCom should work with Exeter School Dept to create environmental curriculum is unwieldy, no one would want the ConCom to do that, should be support and input only.

Ms. Murphy suggested a bike/pedestrian plan might be worth considering adding.

Ms. Raub said that she hopes the MP will contain a design for sustainability across all the boards. All the boards work in their own narrow scope. When ConCom sees the projects, most of the time the big decisions have all been made. They should ask: does this project fit into a green, sustainable community? Mr. Campbell said that many boards and departments have to work together on many projects.

Ms. Raub said there is a public session on 1/25/17 and she will give her input there.

#3: Challenges and barriers to achieving objectives: Mr. Piskovitz said lack of authority is one. Mr. Koff said there is a long “to do” list for this year yet. Mr. Campbell said four more alternates would be useful. Ms. Eberhardt said to ask for more funds. Professional development is important too.

What can the Town do in next ten years to achieve objectives? Better communication among boards is one.

Mr. Piskovitz: page 22, town should do more on regional water resource potential. More cooperation is needed and would be worthwhile.

4. Quarterly Treasurers Report

This was tabled to the next session.

5. Committee Reports

a. Property Management

Raynes Barn inspection will be done due to reports of some vandalism-broken windows and the door to well house. Thursday at 8:30 am for the inspection.

b. Trails

Trail Committee meeting will occur in February, no date decided yet. Dog wastes issue is a big one. Mountain Bike Patrolers were speaking to owners of dogs off leash on properties. Ms. Surman walks her dogs and sometimes off

leash but always picks up the wastes. Off leash and dog wastes are two very different issues.

c. Outreach

Full Moon Snowshoe event on 2/10/17, need more snow this year, but last one was well attended. Parking is an issue. Discussion on parking and whether to limit it in any way. Once plowed can't park anywhere else, so can say it's closed if parking is full there. Discussion on sign-ups. Ms. Eberhardt liked idea of a sign up, due to limiting it to assure that families with kids that want to go will be able to actually attend and not be turned away.

Ms. Murphy said that if they created a Facebook Event, and anything changed, signup folks would be notified. She said she could set it up and will. There was more discussion on this possibility and the negatives of limiting it to Facebook users. Discussion on number of folks that might attend and signups was held. Ms. Eberhardt said she would look into signup methods.

Mr. Campbell said that Ben Anderson has a snowmobile to pack a trail. Mr. O'Hearn said that isn't the best way to do it. It's best to snow shoe it a few times to get a trail.

Parking volunteers need vests that reflect the lights for safety. Discussion was held to get DPW involved to provide vests. Bonfire was discussed and it was talked about before. Ms. Raub was apprehensive on it, but Mr. Anderson is pretty reasonable and might have a small fire for marshmallows. Ms. Murphy said he would use broken up pallets.

Snack Shack was not equipped enough last time and ran out of everything. They need funds for this event-\$100 would be best. Ms. Eberhardt moved up to \$100 be allocated to the event, Ms. Surman seconded it, and it was unanimously approved.

History of the property presentation was discussed before the hikers headed out to the trail. Mr. O'Hearn and Ms. Eberhardt did not support it unless it was done inside the barn for folks that go in there. Ms. Murphy said a welcome could include a few words on the property in addition to parameters and such.

Lighting was discussed. It started at moonrise. It's a Friday, so need to be able to let folks get home from work. About a 6:00 or 6:30 pm start would be best.

Group walk approach was best, some cut-throughs occurred. Mr. O'Hearn asked if families or folks could go off on their own. Discussion was held on this approach and trail configuration and being able to get back to the Barn and parking. Members need to be there a little early to help with set ups and such. DPW will be asked to provide some parking definition of stanchions and such. An area for emergency vehicles needs to be kept clear and designated.

The bench and plaque for Pete Richardson was discussed. Other groups want to recognize him as well. Mr. Campbell said it should wait until warmer weather and getting some family out there. Ms. Murphy said there should be a river run in kayaks as a commemoration. Ms. Murphy said that Patrick Seekamp might be involved.

6. Approval of Minutes: December 13, 2016

There was discussion on changes, corrections and additions on the Minutes of December 13, 2016. After that discussion Ms. Raub moved to approve them as amended during the discussion and it was seconded by Ms. Surman. Ms. Eberhardt abstained as she was not present that evening but the vote for approval was otherwise unanimous.

7. Correspondence

One matter was taken out of order above by the Chair.

Ms. Murphy also said that she got a legal notice from Stratham at 2 Oxbow Road on the river. No details on development, but public hearing on Jan 18th, one lot line `Municipal Center. Ms. Murphy said she thinks there is some shared Conservation Land interests in Oxbow with Stratham and Exeter.

8. Other Business

Ms. Eberhardt said great training guides on were available from the UNH Cooperative Extension and folks should check them out.

Mr. Koff said that 80 Epping Rd project is quite visible from the Pond, building is quite close. Should think about that in the future. Might not see it in summer with foliage.

Ms. Murphy said the Program Director of YMCA wanted to know if ConCom would support them using the Morrissette Property as an educational opportunity .

9. Next Meeting: Date Scheduled (2/14/17), Submission Deadline (2/3/17)

10. Adjournment:

There being no other business before the Commission, Ms. Raub moved to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Eberhardt and the vote was unanimous. The Chair adjourned the session at 9:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted by David Pancoast, Recording Secretary.
Finalized by Kristen Murphy, Natural Resource Planner