

Exeter Conservation Commission's

Subcommittee: Raynes Farm Stewardship Committee

August 01, 2017

1. Convene Meeting

Exeter Conservation Commission Chairman Bill Campbell convened the meeting in the Wheelwright Room in the Town Office building at 7:05 pm. Members present were Kathy Norton, Peter Smith, Ben Anderson, Ginny Raub and Natural Resource Planner Kristen Murphy.

2. Review of Purchase Agreements

Mr. Campbell felt by reviewing the agreements entered into by the Town, the seller and LCHIP, an outline of permitted activities for the Raynes property that were compatible with the terms in the agreements could be drafted.

For this meeting four agreements were reviewed.

1. A project agreement between Town and LCHIP.
2. Warranty deed from John Raynes to Town (transfer of property)
3. Deed of Executory interest from Town to LCHIP
4. Stewardship Plan required by LCHIP

(The initial Long Range Raynes Property Development Plan was formulated and later establishing the Raynes Farm Stewardship Committee)

Mr. Campbell read what he found that referenced the uses for the property. In the Executory interest agreement it states *the land is protected for the following uses: agricultural, forestry, water quality, open spaces, public access and passive outdoor recreation*. Barn not specifically referenced.

In the Operation Management Plan drafted at time of purchase states farming the land to be the first objective. Also states barn should be preserved as a classic 19th century barn with 20th century improvements. Also recommends a fund be set up to maintain the barn.

Ms. Norton read from the Town's present Master Plan the General Use policy for conservation land in Exeter: *Unless otherwise noted passive recreational activities - . birding, photography, biking etc. are the only activities permitted.*

Ms. Murphy commented when meeting with fire department, Town Code Enforcement officer and Kevin Smart of DPW, it was determined the barn, without triggering code update, may be used for activities as long as the public gathering is less than 50 people. With the absence of sprinklers, exit doors and signage, the barn cannot be a place of assembly. It was preferred the gathering be outside of the east end door and that people only walk in and out for viewing or activities. It was also determined there could be no admission charge but donations accepted. Events held at the farm must protect the agricultural use of property i.e. not interfering with hay production and conditions for parking must be

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considered. If the barn is incidental to an event such as the snow shoe event were barn was used for refreshments and the attendees are moving about that may be factored into a permitted use.

Ms. Murphy acknowledged the stewardship agreement but added the concept of public education has always been a part of the mission statement. She noted in the past, when Commission was seeking Town funds for singular items and before any real effort had been on outreach, they were denied. Presently the goal of the Conservation Commission is to engage the public, acquaint them with this resource to develop a following and when the time comes to seek funds for structural repairs they will know the property and more apt to have their support.

Acknowledging the Conservation Commission does not have the resources to stage various events to spotlight the property it was suggested to prepare a Use Application similar to the Swasey Parkway application for other groups, individuals to use the property. It could address the components of the various agreements in the application form.

Mr. Anderson's stated that no events have been held at Raynes since last November. If public support was what desired, was unsure would it be there today. Ms. Murphy added what events we have held were an opportunity to acquaint and educate the attendees. She felt while the Stewardship makes the recommendations, the Commission would make the decision on an event mindful of the intent to develop the outreach; possibly to form a Friends group to call upon for support.

Going back to a use form, Mr. Campbell asked what kind of limitations to put on the application. He did not want it to be a lot of steps and have the Commission make the decision; acknowledged agricultural has to be first. The regulations were reviewed and various scenarios were discussed. Ms. Murphy felt just stating that the proposed event "cannot impair the agricultural activity" rather than trying to outline the permitted months. This encompasses any activity that could possibly be adverse to the current or the next growing season. Would the activity be sensitive to the soft ground if used for parking as an example.

In an attempt to list what activities, if any, would/could be permitted on the property, Ms. Murphy was asked to read an email sent along by Conservation member Dave O'Hearn who was unable to attend this meeting. Mr. O'Hearn feels the property should be managed by terms outlined in purchase agreement; passive recreation only. That would include no snowshoe events, no concerts, no pumpkin toss event and no commercial activity. Ms. Norton added there is also the statement from Master Plan she referenced earlier prohibiting all motorized vehicles at any time on conservation land in accordance with the Town ordinance. This would include parking in the fields; cars driving up to barn. Ms. Murphy added most conservation deeds do have exemptions when seeking to promote conservation efforts.

Much discussion followed in an attempt to determine what activities could take place at the property. Still in pursuit of forming some guidelines (for activities) Mr. Campbell asked for responses from those present. The need to invest and engage the townspeople was strong but there was the

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opinion the principals of the LCHIP agreement were to be followed: the agricultural component first and passive recreation only. A majority of the responses were in agreement of acknowledging the agricultural impact (of the event). The frequency of events and number of participants should most likely be decided on an individual basis. Ms. Murphy felt the activities should be locally focused where the educational component is met when event goers learn of the history of property, purpose of conservation value.

There was agreement the form needs to state parking is limited to existing parking area but with the caveat except under special circumstances. The applicant will walk with a commission member (or consult with DPW) a day or two prior to the event and if adverse conditions exists applicant may be denied the exemption: be prepared with backup plan.

Dogs, alcohol, smoking as they appeared on Swasey agreement were discussed; applicable in accordance with Town ordinances. Also addressed from Swasey agreement, the number of gathers permitted before an application would be required. But any use of the barn would require permission.

As to charging a user fee for events and vendors generated discussion on the different scenarios; the idea of a group making a donation to the Conservation fund seemed less commercial than requiring a stated charge. If a Conservation event, have voluntary contribution. But if an outside applicant that commission has no involvement other than oversight what would be the policy? Would not-for-profit groups be exempt? With the number of "what if's" it was decided to speak with Town Manager and get further clarification of what was permitted.

Ms. Murphy will check with Health Code official to determine what number of participants dictates the number of porta-pottys needed on site. Also applicant must provide proof of liability insurance and the area is to be restored within 48 hours.

Ms. Murphy said she would draft an application form to include those comments heard this evening. She would distribute via email and comments would be directed back to her, no need for another meeting. The form, when finalized, would go to the Conservation Commission for approval. The Stewardship Committee sets the guidelines only.

3. Structural Needs of Barn

In determining the next steps for addressing the structural deficiencies of the barn, Mr. Briselden emailed a memo suggesting we submit a warrant article and apply for an LCHIP grant for matching funds at the same time; go for the entire amount rather than applying for one or two items over time. If this is the action plan we would submit an amount- and it can be a best guesstimate-as a placeholder in the CIP (Capital Improvement Projects) plan for 2017. Then use the year to refine the structural needs and estimates and apply for LCHIP matching grant funding along with the Town funding in 2018. This would also allow time for the application to the State for listing in Historic Places registry; already deemed eligible matter of updating application. Ms. Murphy asked if this action plan could be conveyed to the Commission at their August 8, 2017 meeting knowing this committee supports the

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approach to funding renovations. Although no formal vote was taken, there was general agreement to do so

Mr. Campbell did speak with Town Manager on how we fund building repairs. There was agreement to perhaps put one thousand dollars (\$1000.00) in the Town budget for more immediate building repairs. Also take the electricity charges out of the CC budget and transfer over to Town's Other Building account. But Mr. Campbell has not had an opportunity to talk with Mr. Smart as it would come out of DPW's maintenance budget.

4. Other business

Ms. Murphy agreed to draft a Use Application and email to members. Comments could be emailed back to her. She felt a finalized version could be presented to the Commission for approval at the September meeting.

The upcoming Pumpkin Toss event was discussed and Ms. Raub will put together a list of potential expenses and seek ideas and support from the Commission at their August meeting.

With no further business meeting concluded at 8:45 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Ginny Raub
Clerk, Conservation Commission