

Conservation Commission

1/09/18

Draft Minutes

Call to Order:

1. Introduction of Members Present

Present are Sally Ward, Todd Piskovitz, Marie Richey, Andrew Koff, Dave Short, Alyson Eberhardt, Anne Surman, Kristen Murphy, and Bill Campbell. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Campbell at 7:00pm in the Nowak Room of the town office building.

2. Public Comment

Action Items:

1. Event Request: Snowshoe Hullabaloo (Ri Fahnestock, Sarah Sallade)

The race participants will be parking on public works, and they are working on securing those permissions. Otherwise, the race is the same as has been done in past years. Ms. Eberhardt asked who usually does the pre-race inspection and the follow up. Ms. Murphy said that usually a member of the commission does. The event is on February 24th. Mr. Short volunteered to do so.

MOTION: Ms. Eberhardt moved that the race be approved. Mr. Short seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

2. Committee Reports

a. Trails

i. Summer Trail – Fest Planning Sub Group

In the summer, there will be a 10-year anniversary of these events being held. So, they would like to meet with members of the commission to have a discussion about planning some kind of event, to get feedback. Ms. Eberhardt volunteered to help. The commission also thought that Mr. Guindon might like to help. Mr. Koff suggested involving the trails committee with a representative.

b. Property Management

i. Seedling Plantings

These would be in the Henderson Swasey forest. They could either plant in large or small sections. Chairman Campbell said that it might fit in well with the PEA work day. The seedlings are only about 6-12 inches long. He suggested having about 50 seedlings and 12 volunteers to plant. They would also need soil and a supervisor. Ms. Murphy had suggested the McDonald property as another place for plantings. Even though it's an easement, they could possibly secure permission. Also, the property is on a steep bank, so it may be difficult to plant.

Mr. Koff also pointed out that if nobody is taking care of the seedlings, they may die. Ms. Richey said she read through the species in the different packages, and was not enthusiastic about any of them.

They did not seem to fit the area. Mr. Short said he would donate whatever amount of soil they would need. Ms. Eberhardt suggested utilizing the UNH Extension's soil sampling lab to test the soil and see if they need additives. Ms. Richey said that the ability to make their own package would be ideal. Ms. Eberhardt suggested using specific locations in the interior. It was suggested that the commission go with 3 tree species and 1 shrub variety. The overall goal is to fill the empty space so that invasive species do not take over. Ms. Richey also brought up the concern with deer. Mr. Short suggested that they get species that deer typically don't target.

As for water, they probably would not require much to begin with because of the seedling's small size. They would also be able to pick fairly damp places. Mr. Short said that it would be good to start out with seedlings because the maintenance effort would be much lower than with older trees. He also suggested that the commission wait to buy until February, which would give them time to come up with recommendations of seedling types.

MOTION: Mr. Koff moved to approve no more than \$200 for seedlings and supplies this spring, to come out of the conservation land management budget. Ms. Richey seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

ii. Harvest Path and Opening/Invasive Baseline Map

Ms. Murphy that the mapping by Charlie Marino of the Harvest Path was a great idea to document invasive species there. The commission had no other comments.

iii. PEA Climate Action Day Activity Request (4/27)

They had a good event last year, and the kids that took part enjoyed the day. Last year, they cleared brush and spread it out to prevent erosion at a site. The commission is looking forward to doing it again this year.

iv. Draft CC Submission for Town Report

Chairman Campbell asked the commission to, if they had any comments or found any mistakes, let Ms. Murphy know. The report is due on Thursday to be finalized. Ms. Eberhardt said that on the second page, she was unclear about the use of the word "coverage". Chairman Campbell also asked the commission to look at the Natural Resource section of the master plan, as comments for that are due on Friday.

c. Outreach

i. Winter Outreach

1. Full Moon Snowshoe

Ms. Murphy suggested a property like Morrissette, because there is parking which is plowed, and because it is a smaller loop. It is usually intended to bring attention to the Raynes property, because the commission would like to bring a warrant article to attention next year to fix the barn. Ms. Richey said that if it was in the budget, they could invite people from White Pine to do outreach on conservation commission land. It could involve any number of programs. She said she would figure out what the cost would be. Southeast Land Trust was also brought up. Mr. Short said that maybe it would be a good idea to have a demo of the Snowdog during the event. Ms. Eberhardt also suggested

connecting with the local YMCA, or having them co-sponsorship in some way. They could also connect with Exeter's parks and rec department. March 2nd would be the date, which is a Friday night at the end of February vacation for schools. Ms. Richey volunteered to be there on the day of. The commission also would like to have a fire so that participants can warm up and drink hot chocolate.

2. Raynes Open Barn

Ms. Ward said that she would be able to help Ms. Raub with this idea. Ms. Murphy suggested having it each month on a consistent weekend. They could begin in the 3rd weekend of January. The weather is one concern that the commission had.

d. CC Representatives Report on Other Committees

3. Approval of Minutes: December 5th Meeting

Mr. Campbell suggested that on page 1, the word buffer needs to be added in the 3rd paragraph. Ms. Eberhardt said that her name was spelled wrong as well.

MOTION: Ms. Richey moved to approve the minutes as amended. Ms. Eberhardt seconded the motion. Mr. Piskovitz abstained from the vote because he was not present at the last meeting, and it passed 6-0-1.

4. Correspondence and Other Business:

a. NHACC Survey

Ms. Murphy said the NHACC wanted to receive responses to the survey, and also a list of members on the back with the offer to be added to their e-newsletter list. They would put together one response and submit it. The first question was the conservation commission's goals. One of the goals suggested was buying land to conserve. Of course, one hurdle to doing this is limited finances. The commission agreed that they needed to work on setting more goals and becoming more plan-oriented. Chairman Campbell brought up the suggestion of putting paper copies of trail guides into the new Chamber of Commerce office. There is also a section to list general activities. Ms. Richey suggested that outreach shouldn't be a goal of the commission, but instead they could partner with other people who use the land to do their own outreach events.

As for what NHACC can do to help them reach goals, Ms. Eberhardt said that it would be useful to get more information on their role as an advisory board. Chairman Campbell pointed out that the RSAs define their role, which is primarily to make recommendations. Ms. Murphy said that the commission is expected to be the voice of conservation, but the planning board can choose whether or not to follow their recommendations. Another issue is precedent and looking at things holistically. Ms. Murphy emphasized the importance of the master plan and natural resource survey. The commission wanted to submit the addition of the Raynes Barn to the state historical register as an achievement for the NHACC website.

Mr. Short wanted to know how other conservation commissions have dealt with having a structure to protect, such as the Raynes Barn. The commission would be interested in more guidance from NHACC. The commission then made decisions on whether they would be interested in the e-newsletters.

c. Request for Position on Use of Motorized Winter Trail Groomer in Henderson Swasey and Oaklands

Bob Kelly, a member of the trails subcommittee, said that the trails in the town forest in the winter are set depending on who uses the trail first, such as hikers vs cross-country skiers, and that this may not be the best set up for other people with different uses. He suggested using a motorized sled which smooths out the trail, and would make it useful for everybody. He said that the sled would cost about \$3,000-\$3,500, and said that various people would be willing to chip in for private ownership. The private owners would operate the sled to take care of the trails in the town forests. The sled can also be used for other purposes on other trails. The town can then choose to buy one on their own later or not.

The town of Merrimack has used this before, with great success. The sled would need to be used with at least a few inches of snow so that it properly compacts. As for insurance liability, there is an RSA that prevents the town from liability. The trail would be able to have turns to fit any circumstances; biking, walking, snowshoeing, and skiing. Ms. Richey asked if all of the trails are used, or if they only needed to groom some of them. Mr. Kelly said that the vast majority of trails are used by at least somebody during the winter season.

One concern was that the Henderson Swasey deed says there are to be no snow traveling vehicles, which the motorized sled may fall under. Also, maybe people would see the tracks from the motorized sled and think that snowmobiles are okay to use. There was some confusion if the commission would need to own the sled in order to use it as "maintenance". They would be able to use it freely in the Oaklands because there is not specific language within the deed. The intent of the motorized sled would be to clearly define the trail for everybody to use. Mr. Campbell suggested borrowing the sled from Merrimack, and trying it out with the Oaklands town forest. There was also the concern that the compacted trail would turn into mud later in the season. Mr. Kelly said that the trails would actually turn into ice before that could happen. They will also need to make sure the easements are in alignment.

MOTION: Ms. Eberhardt moved that, contingent on all permissions being secured, that the use of a Snowdog be allowed in the Oaklands town forest to groom a loop trail. Mr. Short seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

d. Other Business

Ms. Eberhardt brought up a meeting with the Rockingham Planning Commission about an event to highlight sustainability initiatives in Exeter. The event will be on 2/06/18, from 4:30-7:30pm in the town hall. The conservation commission will have the opportunity to be there and table at the event. She asked if the commission would like to do that, though herself and Mr. Piskovitz will already be in attendance. It would be a good way for people in the town to learn about the commission. The event should relate to climate change and what they have done towards resiliency. Mr. Short suggested having a sign-up sheet to help with some future events.

5. Next Meeting: Date Scheduled (2/13/18), Submission Deadline (2/2/18)

Non-Public Session:

Non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (d) for the consideration of the acquisition, sale, or lease of real or personal property

The committee went into non-public session at 9:21pm.

Committee returned from non-public session at 9:35 pm.

Mr. Koff motioned to seal the minutes of the non-public session, seconded by Mr. Piskovitz. Roll call vote to seal the minutes passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 9:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted by recording secretary Samantha Cave.