

Conservation Commission

Draft Minutes

5/8/18

Call to Order:

1. Introduction of Members Present

Present at the meeting were Bill Campbell, Dave Short, Andrew Koff, Ginny Raub, Todd Piskovitz, Sally Ward, Carlos Guindon, Don Clement, and Dave Sharples. The meeting was called to order at 7:00PM by Chairman Campbell.

2. Public Comment

There was no public comment at this meeting.

Action Items:

1. June Trail Race – Sarah Sallade & Ri Fahnestock

Ms. Sallade spoke about the 10th annual Exeter Trail Race, which would be hosted in both the Henderson-Swasey and Oakland forests. It is a 10 mile route in total, with only a few small changes along the route. She has reached out to the new owner of the Chamberlain property, and has not heard back from them yet, but they would get a certificate of insurance if they were to agree to their property being used. There were about 185-200 people last year, and they are expecting the same amount of people this year. She was hoping that the conservation commission would have a booth of some kind to talk about what they do. The race will be on 6/23/18, and registration will begin at 8:30AM.

Mr. Short said that he spoke with C3I, Inc, who has given them permission to begin the race before the culvert on Commerce Way so that they do not have to enter the parking lot. A small bridge will have to be put in and the entrance is quite narrow. Mr. Clement said that he would be happy to help with the conservation commission table. He also asked about parking. Ms. Sallade said that Northeast Distribution and Northeast Lantern gave permission to park on their properties. Last year, there was no parking allowed at C3I, Inc.

MOTION: Ms. Raub moved to approve the Exeter Trail Race on 6/23/18. Mr. Short seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

2. Municipal Technical Assistance Grant Letter of Support – Dave Sharples

Mr. Sharples, the Exeter town planner, talked about this grant application which is due on 6/1/18. The draft is finalized, and one of the requirements is to submit letters of support. The grant would support many of the items in the new master plan. The grant is through Plan NH and is for up to \$20,000, with a 25% match which is budgeted for. The purpose would be to hire a consultant to look at the current ordinances on affordable housing, and to incentive affordable housing and feature-based density ordinances where the supporting infrastructure already exists. This would give the planning board more flexibility and increase strong urban design. He thought the conservation commission would be interested because this incentivizes in-fill development which would lessen environmental impacts vs. building on new areas of green space.

Ms. Raub asked what high-quality street-edge connection would entail. Mr. Sharples said that the street edge is where the property meets the street, and it better connect the development to the sidewalk in a seamless way. The grant would be for the creation of more affordable housing, and good urban design would be one positive aspect of this. Mr. Sharples said that one example of a place where this in-fill development would be possible is around Lincoln Street or along Portsmouth Avenue. Mr. Campbell said that he was worried that development would still occur in green space regardless of the incentive. Mr. Sharples said that this could help to steer developers towards in-fill, but acknowledged that the market cannot be controlled with the current zoning. Mr. Campbell thinks the idea is interesting and thinks it would increase compact affordable housing.

Ms. Ward asked how affordable housing would be defined. Mr. Sharples said that it depends, but right now it is defined as 120% of the median regional income, but he would recommend about 100% of the median regional income. Ms. Raub asked if they would be able to increase the cost. Mr. Sharples said that there could be a 20-30 year deed restriction to prevent that. Mr. Clement pointed that the developer needs to pay for infrastructure if there is none there, and the in-fill density should decrease the costs making it beneficial for the developer to build affordable housing. Also this would reduce the impacts on open-spaces and protect them.

Mr. Guindon also said that it would be important to replace any trees, and to use non-invasive species. He also asked about the possibility of incorporating energy and water efficiency into the developments. Mr. Piskovitz asked if the energy committee was involved in these discussions. Mr. Sharples said that he could talk to them.

MOTION: Ms. Ward moved that the conservation commission write a letter of support for the municipal technical assistance grant. Mr. Piskovitz seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

3. Invasive Plant Management in Henderson Swasey

Mark Damsell said that on 4/29/18, they started at the first landing in the Henderson-Swasey forest. Things were just starting to emerge, but they did find some burning bush and glossy buckthorn. There were also some other plants beginning, but they could not be positively identified at that time. Ms. Murphy has suggested various groups monitoring different areas and identifying the plants to keep track of the different invasive. Mr. Campbell said that Ms. Murphy had also suggested marking the plants with paint, and in the fall having volunteers remove the species. Mr. Campbell pointed out that the gasoline being added will clear some of the area, and might even act like a barrier to invasive plant spread.

Mr. Damsell said that he had reached out to his neighbors, who said that they would like to be kept informed. Mr. Guindon thanked them for meeting to coordinate the efforts. Kris Vaughn said that the more people that get involved, the faster the work can get done. She suggested using different colors to tag plants as being high vs. lower important. She also said that an orientation for volunteers could be helpful so that people can identify the plants. UNH Extension is going to have an "invasives academy" which could be helpful for some of the commission members to attend. The commission is hoping to use mechanical methods of control before resorting to chemicals. Mr. Damsell asked if it would be possible to begin to cut the bittersweet before it goes to flower, so that it does not spread as easily. Mr. Guindon said the best method is to cut the vine in two places, leaving a large gap in between.

4. Fall Disc Golf Proposal for Raynes Farm in Collaboration with Parks & Recreation

The Raynes Farm Stewardship Committee had approved this idea, which would allow for a disc golf course at Raynes Farm during a 3-day event. The targets are moveable which would leave little environmental impact. The conservation commission would do a 50/50 ticket split with the disc golf company, and tickets are around \$17. The event would be sponsored by both the recreation department and the conservation commission. One thing to be figured out is parking. There is an area covered in brush that could be used for parking if it was cleared. There was also a discussion about potentially using a shuttle service with the recreation department. Mr. Piskovitz also pointed out that since people come and go, there would probably not be a lot of cars at one time. The event would take place after the last haying in fall.

MOTION: Mr. Koff moved that the conservation commission work with the parks and recreation department and the disc golf company to put on the event. Mr. Guindon seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Ms. Raub and Mr. Koff volunteered to help out with the event further.

5. Raynes Farm Draft Event Application Form

The commission first looked at the draft use regulations of Raynes Farm which was included in their packet. The commission decided to clarify that the maximum occupancy of the barn would be limited to a maximum of 50 people at any one time. Mr. Clement suggested making sure that it was clear that the commission has the final parking approval. Instead of the parking plan, they could include "expected parking needs". They are also going to strike "applicants are responsible for a parking plan" from the use agreement. The gravel lot currently fits about 6-8 cars, so parking is tight. The commission also wanted to add that alcohol needs to be in accordance with local and state regulations not just state, and that the commission needs to approve it.

Mr. Sharples asked what portion of the funds must be contributed to the commission. Mr. Clement suggested creating a fee schedule. They could also have fee waivers for any charitable events or other such uses. Mr. Sharples said that he would talk to Ms. Murphy about what the process would be to charge a fee. The commission will also need to check with LCHIP regulations.

6. LCHIP Grant Application Update

Mr. Campbell and Ms. Murphy had attended the information session, and they will have a meeting with the LCHIP committee on 5/10/18 to see if they can get data without having a study done. Right now, the numbers are best estimates. LCHIP would prefer to see an engineering study done which would cost money. There will be some competition for the grant.

7. Committee Reports

a. Property Management

On 4/27/18, they had 14 students from PEA who planted 65 saplings at Henderson-Swasey for Climate Action Day. The saplings were staked and covered with wire to protect them.

b. Trails

There is also an eroded trail at Henderson-Swasey that Mr. Short will look at. There are other trails that need to be re-routed at some point in the summer.

c. Outreach

Bob Glowacky scheduled the Alewives Film Festival for 5/26/18 from 6:00PM-10:00PM in the PEA Student Center on Tan Lane. There will be a documentary on the Great Dam Removal and other wildlife films, as well as a panel of experts from different environmental groups. The films have varying lengths and subjects to cover a wide variety of interests. The event will be free, and is open to the public.

Ms. Raub talked about packing seedlings with Peter Waltz at the Lincoln Street School, and they were labeled so that people knew what kinds of trees they were. The rain barrel sale was also successful.

8. Approval of Minutes: April 10th Meeting

MOTION: Mr. Koff moved to approve the minutes as submitted. Ms. Raub seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

9. Election of Officers

Officers of the commission are elected annually, although the terms are every three years.

MOTION: Mr. Guindon nominated Mr. Campbell as the chair of the commission. Mr. Short seconded the nomination, and the motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. Campbell nominated Mr. Guindon as the vice-chair of the commission. Ms. Raub seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. Short nominated Mr. Koff as the treasurer of the commission. Mr. Guindon seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

The commission decided to wait to vote on the clerk position, because Ms. Raub is now an alternate member and Ms. Ward will likely be moved to a voting position.

10. Other Business

SELT NH and NHACC sent a thank you for the dues payment. Ms. Murphy had sent an email that Darren Winham of the economic development department offered to film some of the trail segments with Mr. Glowacky for a short EXTV segment.

Next Meeting: Date Scheduled (6/12/18), Submission Deadline (6/1/18)

MOTION: Ms. Raub moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Piskovitz seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:45PM by a unanimous vote.