

Conservation Commission

Draft Minutes

6/12/18

Call to Order:

1. Introduction of Members Present

Present at the meeting were Anne Surman, Todd Piskovitz, Carlos Guindon, Bill Campbell, Andrew Koff, Sally Ward, Kristin Murphy, Ginny Raub. The meeting was called to order at 7:00PM by Chairman Campbell.

2. Public Comment

There was no public comment brought forth at this meeting.

Action Items

1. Exeter Rose Farm – Conservation Easement Submittal, associated with the Exeter Rose Farm

Open Space Subdivision Plan at Tax Map 54 Lot 5, 6, 7 and Tax Map 63, Lot 205 (Brenda Kolbow, MSC)

Todd Baker from the Rose Farm development introduced this topic, where Rose Farm is proposing to put a conservation easement on 13.44 acres of land on the property. They believe it meets all of the conservation criteria. In the proposed easement area, there is lots of mature tree growth and wetlands, and existing trails (for which the HOA will provide trail maintenance). The easement abuts the Henderson-Swasey town forest and Norris Brook.

Marc Jacobs, the wetland and soil scientist for the project, went through each of the easement criteria for Exeter and explained why they believe the proposed area meets these criteria. For example, the land would protect water quality in addition to providing a habitat for wildlife. It would also provide an opportunity for public enjoyment because of the trails and natural areas. In addition, the land provides a link between the Henderson-Swasey forest and Norris Brook. The land proposed also has a plan for long-term management and a survey plan, and the development would be open to a discussion on a stewardship fee.

Mr. Jacobs explained that, of the 13.44 acres, 10.7 acres is upland and 2.75 is wetland. In one area, Norris Brook is the property line. At the top of the easement is about 1,600ft of shared border with Henderson-Swasey in a narrow strip. One reason for the odd shape of the easement is to avoid infrastructural issues as part of easement, such as drainage and granite slabs. He said they used guidance from Ms. Murphy to determine the area of the easement.

Ms. Ward asked what would happen to Jailhouse Brook, which wasn't included in the easement area. Mr. Jacobs explained that it would be part of the open space area which would fall under the control of the HOA. He also said that they are preparing HOA documents that state it is the intention to maintain open access. Every homeowner in the division will have a voice in the protection of the open space. Chairman Campbell asked where the detention pond drains into. Mr. Jacobs said that there is

drainage to the wetlands and towards Norris Brook. Chairman Campbell then asked about the refuge that was seen on the site walk, and it was confirmed that any trash would be removed.

Another concern from the commission was that the HOA owns the land, while the town would own the easement - who would be building the bridges and responsible for the trails? Mr. Baker said that the HOA would be responsible for maintaining the trails. The trail crossings are fairly simple and narrow, and wouldn't be expensive to build. Chairman Campbell said that he was worried that the land protection policies did not apply to the upper east side of the proposed easement, and that he did not want the commission to take on too many easements to monitor well.

Ms. Surman clarified that if the easement is approved, the developers would get an additional density bonus of 10%. Mr. Baker said that the upper lots are much narrower lots versus if they tried to maximize space. They have 41 lots and 46 units. Mr. Guindon agreed with Chairman Campbell about the east side, because it has a lot of invasive species and also extends the space that needs to be monitored. The west side would be easier because it's next to the Henderson Swasey property. The upper strip provides more of a buffer, but would need to be monitored too. He was also concerned about the wetland area because a lot of refuse has been dumped and it has a lot of invasives too. Ms. Ward asked about points of public access. Baker pointed out the handful of spots on the map. Also, there are some areas for street parking as well.

The first public comment was from Pete Steckler who cautioned the commission against taking up easement land that was not high in conservation value. He encouraged the commission to take their stewardship responsibilities seriously. He pointed out that the northern strip has about 20 lots abutting it, and already has a 100-foot buffer in place maintained by the HOA. In addition, he did not think that the water quality protection was enough.

Steve Hallert said he didn't think the easement as presented would be beneficial because much of the land being protected is already not buildable. The discussion of an easement seems premature in absence of an approved plan. Also, the upper strip has about 20 lots which provide opportunity for mistreatment. The easement would require monitoring by commission, which seems too risky and time-consuming. He suggested that restrictions on landowner's deed could be sufficient for protection.

Suzanne Iverson wanted to clarify that the commission would consider the impact on the Henderson Swasey forest. She was also concerned that the builders said that the trails would be preserved anyway, but now they need the easement for that. Her opinion was that the developers are using the easement to get the density bonus. She also felt that monitoring the land would be too much of a burden.

Jen Brackett-Piskovitz confirmed from the commission that if this was voted through, it would only be an approval of the easement. She said that she didn't think the environmental issues of the project had been addressed. Norris Brook flows through an area on property as being high safety concern and is vulnerable to inundation. The sewer pump station also sits in that high-risk area, and is surrounded on three sides to wetlands and adjacent to a perennial stream feeding into Great Bay. She was worried about what would happen if pump station fails. The town also does not know the quality of the wetlands surrounding the land. She was also concerned about the impervious surface when combined with development on Epping Road.

Chairman Campbell said that the pump station was not being considered tonight as part of the easement, but the planning board will ask for a recommendation from conservation commission where that will be discussed and the evaluation of the wetlands as well. He explained that recommendation would be in conjunction with conditional use permit. Ms. Ward stated that tonight, the commission only needs to make a decision on the easement and not the overall project.

Chairman Campbell said that there would have to be a deed written up that would also need to be approved. He thinks the commission should ask that, if it's approved, the HOA would fund the monitoring of the property. The town has hired people in the past over the summer to do monitoring.

Mr. Koff asked how much of the land in easement would be buildable. Mr. Jacobs said that they could calculate that number. Mr. Baker said that some of the land covered under the easement would be very sought after if put on the market. There was some confusion and discussion among the commission about the requirements of the open space for their density bonus.

Ms. Murphy clarified that the proposed easement before the commission is only the highlighted green area in their map. She said that the density bonus is based off of 50% of open space accepted as conservation or recreation purposes. For the project's category, they are required to provide 5 acres of open space. In order for them to receive a density bonus, they would need to offer half of that open space as conservation/recreation land.

Mr. Piskovitz recused himself from further discussion and from the final vote. Ms. Ward asked if they could determine what they want to accept as the easement, and the power of the HOA. The commission in general did not see the purpose of the upper strip or the east side of the easement. The upper strip would already be protected by a no-cut buffer. There was then discussion about making the land an easement, or a fee-owned property. It was decided that fee-owned would be simpler.

MOTION: Mr. Guindon moved to approve the concept of having a fee-owned property on the western part of the Exeter Rose Farm property, not including the buffer shown. Ms. Ward seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

2. Adoption of Land Trust Alliance Standards and Practices

Ms. Murphy said that, in order to apply for the LCHIP Grant, applicants must adopt the Land Trust standards and practices, the 12 guiding principles of the alliance. In the packet is the list, and how to interpret the principles.

MOTION: Ms. Ward moved that the conservation commission adopt and commit to implementing Standards 1-12 set by the Land Trust Alliance. Mr. Guindon seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

3. Committee Reports

a. Property Management

i. Raynes LCHIP Grant Application

Chairman Campbell brought up the LCHIP Grant application, and said that the commission would need to ask the Select Board to support the application. They are in process of getting the

application together. The deadline to submit is 6/22/18. He also said that the process this year is very competitive.

MOTION: Mr. Koff moved to ask the Select Board to support the application. Ms. Ward seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

ii. Raynes Farm Event Application Form Update

The Select Board wants to get a uniform application form for all events. They are in the process of creating this form, and the conservation commission will modify it for use for Raynes Farm. The Select Board will have a work session about it on 6/25/18.

iii. Exeter Country Club Climate Resiliency Planning Project

Ms. Murphy said that the conservation commission has a conservation easement on part of the Exeter Country Club land, and that some of the land is also owned by the commission by fee. The shoreline along Wheelwright Creek is encroaching along the golf course, and the marsh is moving towards the golf course. Alyson Eberhardt found a grant opportunity for a coastal resiliency-based project. They met with the golf course and explained the prediction for sea level rise. Both the tee and green areas of the golf course are predicted to be underwater. It would be too expensive to move the golf course.

Instead, they are proposing a grant to design a climate resilient buffer in partnership with the golf course. This would meet the needs of the golf course and preserve conservation. They met with the Country Club's board of directors, who were supportive. The next steps are figuring out the cost of the design, and finding out if the golf course is able to match the funding. The application is due around the next conservation commission meeting date in July.

Mr. Campbell asked about the other side of the property. Ms. Murphy said that it has a higher bank, but that it will still likely be affected by sea level rise. The prediction used would be a worst-case scenario of extreme sea level rise with storm surge. She has not looked at the homes around the property. The grant must be used for something that is for public benefit, and could not be used on private land like homes. The board was interested in this idea, and was supportive on moving forward.

iv. Invasive Study Report

Mr. Guindon said that the invasives team applied two ways of marking and locating invasive species. The first method used is paint, which is faster but messier. The land had a lot of invasive species. Another method used was flagging tape, which is slower but more precise. The paint seemed to disappear because the invasives are growing so quickly. The flagging may also disappear soon too. The upper area of the property seemed like there was not evidence of invasives.

Students might be interested in getting involved to monitor and gather data. Any species removal would be volunteer-based in the fall. Chairman Campbell suggested meeting in the landing with a lot of invasives, and working in that area. Mr. Guindon said that if they were to collect data, they would not remove them to see the difference in species and timing. He would like to get people together and find a common time to work on the land.

b. Trails

Dave Short has rerouted a trail by the new landing because it was too steep, to prevent people from making their own trail.

c. Outreach

i. Raynes Farm Fall Event in collaboration with Parks and Rec

Chairman Campbell and Ms. Murphy met with Josh Cilley and Greg Bisson to pick October 12th - 14th as the date for the disc golf event. Parks and Rec will work with Mr. Cilley in finding sponsorship. The commission's role will be to help setup the event, and to include educational aspects of the barn. A portion of the funds would be a donation to the conservation fund to support Raynes repairs. Chairman Campbell brought up the idea of bringing the Mini Maker Fair to Exeter, which could be set up in the barn. It is a fair for handmade crafts. A potential date would be after the golf event, and could be October 19th.

4. Election of Clerk

Chairman Campbell explained the role of the clerk, which includes taking minutes and drafting correspondence for the commission if the staff members are not there.

MOTION: Mr. Koff nominated Mr. Piskovitz to be elected as the clerk. Mr. Guindon seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

5. Treasurers Report

Mr. Koff updated the commission on their budget so far. They haven't spent a lot to date, and most of the money spent went towards the spring tree program and the sapling plantings in Henderson Swasey, as well as some membership dues. He said that the CC should begin to line up mowing contract and other bigger expenses for the year.

MOTION: Ms. Ward moved that the commission accept the treasurer's report. Mr. Piskovitz seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

6. Approval of Minutes: May 8th Meeting

MOTION: Mr. Piskovitz moved to accept the minutes of 5/8/18 as submitted. Mr. Koff seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

7. Other Business

Mr. Koff talked about the first annual Alewife Film Festival which had recently occurred. He thanked Bob Glowacky and EXTV for putting it on, and commented that it was well-attended and very professional. The festival ended with a panel discussion and had a lot of good films shown.

There is an upcoming EPA event at Exeter High School, which is a public conference on PFAS (per-and-polyfluoroalkyl substances) in drinking water. This is becoming a hot topic, and EPA had a national summit recently and are now doing regional workshops. The event in Exeter is the New England wide conference. It is taking place on 6/25/18 and 6/26/18.

8. Next Meeting: Date Scheduled (7/10/18), Submission Deadline (6/29/18)

MOTION: Ms. Raub moved to adjourn the conservation commission meeting at 9:15PM. Mr. Piskovitz seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by recording secretary Samantha Cave.