

Exeter Conservation Commission
April 9, 2019
Town Offices Nowak Room
Final Minutes

Call To Order

1. Introduction of Members Present

Present at tonight's meeting were Bill Campbell, Ginny Raub, Todd Piskovitz, Andrew Koff, Dave Short, Lucretia Ganley, Trevor Mattera, Julie Gilman, and Kristen Murphy. Alyson Eberhardt, Carlos Guindon, Sally Ward, Lindsey White, Andy Weeks were not present. Mr. Campbell called the meeting to order at 7 PM.

2. Public Comment

- a. There was no public comment at this meeting.

Action items

1. Sustainability Office Advocates Update

Exeter resident Robin Tyner spoke about the sustainability office. There is a group of nine volunteer "advocates" working on this project, six of whom have memberships on four different town boards or committees. They have talked to a dozen different communities to help answer the question of what this office should look like, and have four ideas: 1) this is an office, rather than a person, in which every department has a role; 2) this is a part-time person under the Town Planner; 3) this is a part-time person under the Town Manager; or 4) this is a part-time or full-time person under the Select Board. Ms. Gilman said that reporting to the Town Manager or the Select Board is the same thing, because their day to day would be with the Town Manager.

The advocates have come up with a draft job description, but are not ready to share it widely; they are just gathering information prior to discussing it with the Energy Committee and Select Board. Ms. Tyner did read their draft mission statement: *To guide the development of policies and practices that simultaneously promote economic well-being, strong community connections, and a healthy environment; to coordinate across all town departments, boards, committees and commissions to ensure long-term sustainability of natural resources; and to ensure that water and energy resources, uses, quality, and impacts are considered in all decision-making processes that impact the town and its people.*

Mr. Mattera said that seeing a draft of a vision or plan would help the Commission understand how to integrate the office or person. Without seeing that, he's cautious about the apparent overlap with Kristen Murphy's role. Mr. Piskovitz said he would like to see this be an office of its own, not part of a department. He said that Kristen Murphy works for the Planning Department, so anything the Conservation Commission discusses is translated by Kristen to the Town Planner and the Planning Board, but that doesn't work with Zoning or Economic Development. Mr. Mattera agreed, saying different commissions and boards are currently siloed. He suggested that if there were a person who was a sustainability officer, this person could be the backbone for a diverse committee, perhaps comprised of one person from every board, with a focus on overall sustainability in Exeter. This role could mirror Kristen Murphy's

role in the Conservation Commission. Ms. Gilman said that several years ago they started doing an all boards meeting, but it was not well attended. She suggested this position could take the place of that effort. Mr. Mattera said he would love to see that coordination, bringing those people together and holding them accountable. He'd be more comfortable with that than just a middleman for the boards.

Ms. Murphy said the mission statement is a great start, but boards should be reading and reviewing their product, looking for conflicts and improving their proposal. She added that there are ways to share drafts without having them misunderstood as a final plan. Ms. Tyner said they would be in touch with her when ready.

2. Appointment Renewals and Officer Term Reminder

Mr. Campbell said that there were three people whose terms were up, but they have all renewed. At the next meeting they'll have an election of officers. Ms. Gilman added that the official reappointments are not ready yet.

3. Dues for NHACC, SELT (Funding request)

Mr. Campbell said they need \$700 for NHACC dues and \$125 for SELT. This is within the commission's budget.

MOTION: Mr. Piskovitz moved to approve \$700 for NHACC and \$125 for SELT for their dues. Mr. Short seconded. All were in favor.

4. Committee Reports

a. Planning and Property Management

i. SCA Invasive Plant Management Opportunity (Funding Request)

Ms. Murphy discussed the Student Conservation Association (SCA), which provides assistance with trail work and other conservation projects and gives young field crews a learning opportunity. There's the potential for hiring them on for 5 day stint; they would have to make a commitment to meet with them periodically, provide a porta-potty, and allow them camp on site. There's nothing in the lease that says they can't camp at the town forest, and the Cub Scouts used to camp there.

They could use the forestry account, which is revenue from the logging operation at Henderson-Swasey, and was intended for use for invasive plant work. It's difficult to use volunteers for such work. Mr. Koff added that a dedicated crew would make more progress than volunteers. He said that they have trail projects to mix in if necessary, but Mr. Piskovitz said that Dave Short and his group like to do trail projects, and it would be good to use money to get rid of invasives. Ms. Murphy said that they also have interns and volunteers to support those trail projects. Mr. Short agreed, saying a concerted effort on invasives should be the only focus.

Mr. Campbell suggested that Carlos Guindon could be the contact person and coordinate with them in early June. Mr. Short offered to work with Mr. Guindon, and Ms. Ganley also volunteered.

MOTION: Ms. Ganley moved to approve \$5,500 from the Conservation Commission Forestry fund to fund this invasive work. Mr. Mattera seconded. All were in favor.

ii. Community Garden Update

Ms. Murphy said that on March 25th she presented Gilman Park to the Select Board as a potential Community Garden site. The town owns Gilman Park and Parks and Rec manages it, but it has a conservation easement with the Southeast Land Trust (SELT). She received permission from the Select Board to have Russ Dean submit their request for a garden to SELT. Since SELT must vet the project with their boards and committees and the attorney general, she won't be hearing back until late summer. There are still details to work out in the meantime, and she's planning to line up some collaborative opportunities, such as engaging with SST or an Eagle Scout for construction. She felt that SELT was generally positive toward the project. If approved the garden wouldn't be available to the public until at least May 2020.

iii. Conservation & Economy/Downtowns & Trails Program

Ms. Murphy said that she'd attended a workshop held by Cooperative Extension, Nature & Economy on how to promote your natural resources and recoup some economic income from them. The program is called Downtowns and Trails. Organizers come to your community, instruct a team of residents on how to collect data from trail users using a standard set of questions, and station them at the trailheads or on the trails to gather the information. They also interview local businesses. They then put together an action plan for ways to encourage trail users to spend the rest of their day downtown, such as signage or programs sponsored by local businesses. For these services, there's a \$3,000 fee through Cooperative Extension. She asked the board if, were there no grant available, they would like to request this as part of the budget process next year.

Mr. Campbell was interested in how many people go to hike and don't go downtown to find resources like Travel and Nature or places to eat, but he was unsure if this information was worth \$3,000. Ms. Raub asked if this were something the Chamber or the Economic Development Director Darren Winham might be interested in sponsoring. Ms. Murphy responded that Mr. Winham had said he'd help them find funding.

Mr. Mattera said he'd like this work to be done, since the data could support the idea that conservation land benefits the community and the downtown. Mr. Piskovitz said if the study gives them information that will give businesses in town to grow, it's not a lot of money. Mr. Campbell observed that there was a general consensus that they should proceed.

iv. Mitigation Project Update, Conservation Roundtable 4/23

Mr. Campbell said that the project at 20 Continental Drive will be giving mitigation money when they get final approval, but the town can't use it, since they'd have to have a project ready to go. Instead, the project will be contributing to the ARM fund for general mitigation projects. A subcommittee with Lindsay White, Trevor Mattera, Alyson Eberhardt, **Kristen Murphy** and himself have been looking to find a project for the next time. They met before this meeting for proposals and ideas. Ms. Murphy added that they talked about some property acquisitions in nonpublic which she can't discuss. Ms. White will also use her GIS expertise to put together an evaluation of properties in town to look for good mitigation opportunities which would sell well to ARM. Mr. Campbell said that there is a monthly Conservation Roundtable on 4/23, and the guest is Lori Sommer, the director of ARM. They hope to learn from her what kinds of projects sell well and how ready they have to be.

v. Annual Planning Dashboard

Ms. Murphy gave a brief demonstration of how to access the Annual Planning Dashboard document on Google Drive.

vi. Property Monitoring

Mr. Campbell said that everyone on the Commission has one or more assigned properties that they monitor that through the year. He asked new members to contact Ms. Murphy for an assignment. Their task is to go out periodically and check the boundaries, look for trail improvement needs and encroachments, and do a report.

vii. Intern Planning

Ms. Murphy said that she hasn't yet advertised for a summer intern, and she's looking for help with a position description, interviews, reviewing resumes, the selection process, etc. Ms. Gilman and Mr. Koff volunteered to help.

b. Trails

i. Trail marking Update and Draft Kiosks for Henderson Swasey

Mr. Campbell presented a new map of the Henderson Swasey town forest, designed to help people to find their way out. These maps will be posted on mini-kiosks in the forest. They want to stress the trails that are colored, not the secondary trails. Mr. Koff asked if they'd be showing the "spaghetti" mountain biking trails. Ms. Murphy said they could be added but deemphasized, for example by calling them "rogue trails." She added that this mapping effort was done for safety; fire and rescue was looking for improved marking in the forest, so these trails should be on the map. She also suggested they should do something to address the proliferation of trails on the ground.

Mr. Short suggested emphasizing the gas line with a banded line as an important landmark for someone lost. Mr. Mattera asked who the audience for the map will be; Ms. Murphy, said anyone, since it will be posted both on the website and in the forest. Mr. Koff asked that she work on the resolution, since the road names would be unreadable if blown up. He would also like to make the parcel layer of the map transparent to show more landmarks. Ms. Murphy encouraged the commission to send her further suggestions and edits.

ii. Gift for Sign Construction (Funding Request)

Mr. Campbell requested funds to buy Jon Thunberg, who did the trail signs, three of the Chamber of Commerce's gift certificates at \$10 each. He suggested the cost could go under the Trail Maintenance budget.

MOTION: Mr. Short moved to fund \$30 for a gift for Jon Thunberg. Mr. Piskovitz seconded. All were in favor.

c. Outreach Events

i. Raynes Events: Easter Story Hour 4/13, Woodcock Walk 4/22, RFSC meeting 4/17, Bat Presentation/ House Making 5/7 (Funding Request), Raynes Farm Parking Lot Sign Concept (Funding Request)

Mr. Campbell said that the Easter Story Hour is still planned. There will be an egg hunt, Vernon Farm will be bringing baby chicks and rotisserie chickens, and there will be readers in the barn. 1 - 3 on Saturday 4/13. The organizer is hoping to get more signups. Mr. Campbell asked if someone could stop by to be a Conservation Commission presence, and Ms. Murphy suggested they could bring Raynes interpretive posters and T-shirts. [The event was subsequently cancelled.]

The Woodcock Walk with Dave O'Hearn is on 4/22. It will be informal, participants will meet in the parking lot and Mr. O'Hearn will take them up to where the woodcock are.

There is a Raynes Farm Stewardship Committee meeting 4/17.

There is a Bat House Making event 5/7, and he's requesting the funds to build the houses. Ms. Murphy said this part of the event is limited to 15, so they will need \$300. They did receive funds from the Disc Golf event that could go toward that, around \$600. They're requiring residents to pay \$20 for that portion of the workshop, so it should work out as long as they have enough sign-ups.

MOTION: Mr. Short moved to approve \$300 for bat house making from the funds from the Disc Golf event. Mr. Koff seconded. All were in favor.

Mr. Campbell said that the Raynes Farm Stewardship Committee liked the idea of a sign on the back of kiosk at Raynes farm. It could be a 2x4 sign that says "Exeter Conservation Center Raynes Farm," and he suggested it also have a sketch of a farmhouse. Mr. Piskovitz thought that a sign would imply that there's a visitor's center or some similar feature there. He likes the idea of the Conservation Center, but he feels they're not ready for the sign. Ms. Gilman said that whatever it is, they have to put the town seal on it. Mr. Campbell will check in with RFSC and bring back further thoughts in May.

Mr. Short said that he met with an Eagle Scout at Raynes to look at the bridge site. He challenged the scout to design it rather than give him a design. He will bring any proposal back for further discussion. Ms. Murphy said this bridge would connect Raynes Farm with the trail network.

ii. SST/ECC Partnership: Morrisette Clean Up 4/19

Ms. Murphy said they've partnered with SST to clean up the Morrisette property on 4/19, 7:30 AM - 1:30 PM, working with 3 different classes. She added that Ms. Eberhardt had an idea to collect some data about the trash, but there seemed to be little interest in the data that would result. Public Works has agreed to haul the material away.

iii. PEA Climate Action Day: 4/26 (Bill)

Mr. Campbell said that Mr. Guindon will teach 14 students from the academy about invasives and have them work on eradicating them. Mr. Guindon will try to mark the invasives in advance.

iv. Spring Tree Presentation 4/30 8:45 - 10:30, packing 4/27

Mr. Campbell reminded the commission that some of them will be helping Peter Waltz on 4/27 with the packing for his tree presentation.

v. Rain Barrel Orders through 5/5. Delivery 5/11

Ms. Murphy said that the rain barrel program is open on Great American Rain Barrel Company site. They are \$79 each or \$69 for Terra Cotta. The barrels will be distributed at public works on Saturday May 11th.

vi. Coop Middle School Project 5/22 and 6/4

Ms. Murphy said this is the second year she'll be working with a middle school science teacher on this project. Ms. Murphy will hold two sessions. In the first, she will talk about buffers and water quality; in the second session, they test the water quality with meters. The sessions are May 22nd and June 4th. If anyone's interested she would like assistance on June 4th to run the different stations. She's also hoping to have the interns by then to help.

5. Approval of Minutes: March 13th meeting

MOTION: Ms. Raub moved to approve the minutes as presented. Ms. Ganley seconded. All were in favor.

6. Correspondence

- a. Notice of a Volunteer River Assessment Program (VRAP) training opportunity. They would help with testing our water quality using meters at 8 different sites. It's a couple of hours' commitment, and could be done on the weekends. She has 3 volunteers so far. This is a Statewide program, and they're offering a training May 4th. She needs to submit a list of names to register. Mr. Koff will attend.
- b. A series of workshops about easement monitoring for volunteers, managing town forests, maps and compass skills, and how to lead a nature walk.
- c. A NH Association of Conservation Commissions potluck dinner April 16 from 5 - 7:30 PM.
- d. Roundtable on "What is Exeter's Housing Future?" April 17th 6 - 8 PM.

7. Other Business

- a. There was no other business at this meeting.

8. Next Meeting

- a. Date Scheduled 5/14/2019, Submission Deadline 5/3/2019

Non-public Session

There was no non-public session at this meeting.

Adjournment

MOTION: Mr. Short moved to adjourn. Mr. Piskovitz seconded. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 9:19 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary