

Exeter Conservation Commission
October 8th, 2019 7 PM
Town Offices Nowak Room
Draft Minutes

Call To Order

1. Introduction of Members Present

Present at tonight's meeting were Bill Campbell, Carlos Guindon, Ginny Raub, Andrew Koff, Sally Ward, Todd Piskovitz, Dave Short, Trevor Mattera, Kristen Murphy, and Julie Gilman.

Lindsey White, Andy Weeks, and Alyson Eberhardt were not present.

Mr. Piskovitz called the meeting to order at 7 PM.

2. Public Comment

Action items

1. McDonnell Conservation Easement issue

Ms. Murphy discussed the ongoing issues at the McDonnell conservation easement. The property owner has lived there for 8 or 9 years, and there has been an increase in dumping, drug exchanges, littering, and other unwanted activities. In August, Ms. Murphy met with the police department and the property owner to discuss enforcement. Bruce Page of the PD offered to coordinate with the department on more evening patrols. That has happened, and there was a recent dumping where the police department investigated, found the person, and cleaned up the majority of the trash. However, on Monday Ms. Murphy received an email from the property owner expressing concerns about continuing issues. Ms. Murphy looked into a gate for the parking lot to physically close the property from dusk until dawn, but it would be too burdensome to open and close it manually, and the cost of an automated gate is too high.

According to the easement, the owner has the right to post the property closed to vehicles without town approval. Should these unwanted uses continue, they could impair the conservation value, so legally there is the ability to close the property if the owner and the town agree. Jay Perkins of Public Works said that dropping two jersey barriers in front would close the property. If they decide to pursue this, the Conservation Commission would make a recommendation to the Select Board, and the Board would come to terms with the property owner. It should probably be part of a public discussion and/or an article in the paper. She asked how the Commission felt about the proposal.

Ms. Ward said closing the parking lot wouldn't be a real solution, because people can still get in without a car. Ms. Murphy said the parking lot closure would be one step closer to getting a handle on these activities. Mr. Campbell said people aren't going to walk all the way in from Court Street. Ms. Murphy said the intent is not to stop people fishing or other legitimate uses, but to limit dumping and other activities in the parking lot. Mr. Campbell said a lot of people use it, but if they think it will limit the unwanted activities they should put up the barriers.

Dave Short asked if a police patrol has any enforcement powers here. Ms. Murphy said it sounds like they have removed people from the property. Mr. Short suggested putting an enforcement mechanism in place, such as improving the signage about the park being closed from dusk until dawn, so that the police could cite any violators. Mr. Campbell said years ago, the police found someone who dumped there and reprimanded them, but did not apply the \$100 fine as the signage states. Mr. Short suggested they use enforcement first, then make a decision to close if necessary. Ms. Murphy said the dumping is the thing that has the monetary amount associated with it; she doesn't know what the police would be able to do to those simply there after hours. Mr. Koff said he'd like to hear from the police, since adding a barrier might actually make enforcement more difficult, as a police car could no longer get in there.

Mr. Piskovitz asked if the Commission would be willing to close the parking lot. Ms. Murphy clarified that the request was to close until a more permanent solution was found. Mr. Campbell said he would be ok with that temporarily. Ms. Ward asked what a more permanent solution would look like. Ms. Murphy suggested a gate that doesn't open from dusk until dawn.

Ms. Gilman suggested that she and Ms. Murphy speak to the Police Chief on this issue.

2. Update on Riverwoods Conservation Easement

Ms. Murphy said that she, Mr. Campbell, and Mr. Guindon went through the draft conservation easement and sent it to RiverWoods, whose counsel is reviewing the changes. Unofficially, there are no major issues, but RiverWoods wants to talk in more detail. One change was to require RiverWoods to create a forest management plan to be reviewed and approved by the Conservation Commission. RiverWoods has a Forestry Committee, so counsel suggested talking with them. Ms. Murphy will come back with more information on this soon.

Mr. Koff asked about the specifics of the changes. Ms. Murphy said draft includes provisions to not permit cell towers or development within the conservation easement. She didn't feel the need to bring the back to the Commission if they weren't sure RiverWoods was on board. Mr. Guindon said if anyone's interested he could provide a copy.

3. Upcoming Workshops

a. NHDES Wetland Rule training dates 10/10 Coastal, 10/16 Project Specific

Mr. Piskovitz said the wetland rules were amended recently, and this will be a training on what those rules mean. Ms. Murphy said the amended rules go live in December. The two trainings are different: October 10th is coastal projects and permitting, and October 16th is project-specific, about residential development types of projects. It seems like both would be important to attend.

4. Committee Reports

a. Property Management

i. Waleryszak Estate

Ms. Murphy said the next step in the easement violation process is to reissue the letter with a shorter response timeframe, and getting legal counsel to review it. She went to look at the property, and it did not appear there's been any change. Ms. Ward asked about the new deadline, and Ms. Murphy said it will be 15 days from receipt of the letter, which has not yet been sent.

ii. Invasive Update

Mr. Guindon said that a map of the invasive work in Henderson-Swasey is in process. He pulled everything north of the gasline on the logging trails, all the way back to the first landing, and it has been mapped. There are lines around the higher density of invasives and noting where he's flagged, mostly on the south side of the gasline, part of which was harvested. He's pulled mostly oriental bittersweet, burning bush, and buckthorn. He pulled them and left them to dry, and found later that 100% were dead, so that seems effective where the growth is not as dense. Where it's heavily infested, we'll have to make a decision. He's cut big plants and they often resprout. Pulling them entirely would be a lot of work.

The other place he did work was at the Irving piece, near the golf course and country club. He's working on removing the bittersweet there. Last time Dave O'Hearn did the mowing, he cut back a lot, so it's more accessible now. Ms. Murphy said she would like to understand more about the history of that property. Mr. Campbell said there used to be a wooden sign there that should be replaced.

b. Trails

i. Eagle Project Update

Mr. Short said that the Eagle Scout had done a little more work, but it's unclear if it will be done this season. Ms. Murphy said it sounded like he was ready to come talk to the Commission, but they haven't heard further from him. Mr. Short said there's a pile of wood chips, but other than that there's nothing detracting from the area.

ii. Trail Signage and Blazing Update

Ms. Murphy said she had finished the blue and green loops in Henderson-Swasey as of the last meeting; she has now finished the yellow loop, and she and Mr. Campbell got most of the junction markers put in. They plan to go out Friday to put up the interior signs and two more junction markers. Mr. Campbell said there has been some trail confusion around the mini kiosk junction; he suggested Mr. Short take a look and see how it could be improved. Some of the trails are also getting rough. Mr. Short said the trails were pretty much status quo. Sometimes if a tree goes down or an area is wet they will get trail creep. Ms. Murphy said at the Camel Hump section there's a new way to come down to the yellow trail. Mr. Short said it had been that way for a long time, but it's more noticeable now. Ms. Murphy said habitat-wise that seemed like a poor location for a trail, and suggested they take a walk to assess it. Mr. Campbell said he would take a look.

c. Outreach Events

i. Upcoming: 10/25 Sky Watch

Ms. Ward said that the events subgroup of the Raynes Farm Stewardship Committee decided not to do Storywalk and Scavenger Hunt because of the structures that Eversource put up. They're still doing the Sky Watch and a solstice event. Brush was cleared from the path to the stone wall, so people can walk up to the barn, but it's rough and would be difficult for children or those with mobility issues. The Sky Watch will have a presentation and time for observations. Parks and Rec provide a shuttle; people will park at Public Works and take the shuttle to Raynes. A telescope may be set up in the parking lot or at the barn. It must be a clear

night. Ms. Murphy said the person from the NH Astronomical Society who's putting it on said they may see Jupiter, Saturn, and two star clusters. Ms. Ward said they're encouraging people to bring flashlights, and hoping they will have a way to illuminate the path like solar lights. Ms. Murphy will put a notice on Facebook and town website. It's free but they're doing tickets so they have a headcount.

Ms. Ward said that Eversource is now looking at a 12 week work schedule, not 6 weeks. They're looking forward to next year when that work is over. The group also talked about a volunteer day to have the farm implements in the barn labelled and displayed.

Mr. Koff asked if they could still park in the parking lot. Ms. Ward said the timber mats start at the barn and follow the line of the electrical towers. The timber mats are rough; there is space to walk on the right, but still some brush and debris there. Ms. Murphy added that on a day to day basis Eversource has snow fencing up along the timber matting, so visitors need to stay north of the electrical line and not head up to the barn.

ii. UNH Extension/Sea Grant Climate Change Outreach Update

Mr. Mattera said last month he talked about Amanda Stone and Lisa Wise saying they'd be willing to put together an education initiative. Since then, they've been brainstorming the event, and had decided that multiple boards should participate. There are a flood of resources and reports, which are usually not interpreted for the community. They want to go through, synthesize, and develop a workshop about the information. They need to decide who will start synthesizing, since the funding didn't support the RPC doing it. The event is targeted for next spring. Ms. Murphy said there will be a meeting in November to discuss it further.

5. Approval of Minutes: Sept 10, 2019 meeting

Ms. Murphy said that Sharon Sommers is spelled "Somers," and "Donohue Tucker" should be "Donahue Tucker." The last sentence on page two should say "The Town Planner said that Riverwoods has done their due diligence and *if they can't find an easement holder* the conservation restriction would satisfy the Planning Board." Also, the resident's name is "Gwen English," not "Lynn English." Mr. Mattera said that in the update about the Cooperative Extension, Ms. Stone's name is "Amanda", not "Mandy," and they are part of the UNH Cooperative Extension *and* the NH Sea Grant, which are two different programs.

MOTION: Mr. Campbell moved to approve the minutes for September 10th as amended. Ms. Ward seconded. All were in favor. Ms. Raub abstained and the motion passed 6-0-1.

6. Treasurers Report and Expenditure Requests; Purchase Requests:

- a. Community Services: \$360 folding chairs for Raynes, \$38 for Sky Watch and Winter Solstice events

Ms. Murphy said that \$360 will buy 12 folding chairs from Walmart. The maximum participants in the barn is 50 so this will get them part of the way. Ms. Ward said there are some chairs out there already but they aren't in the greatest shape.

Ms. Ward said the \$38 is for refreshments for the two events.

MOTION: Mr. Campbell moved to authorize the expenditure of up to \$360 for folding chairs at Raynes and the remainder of the amount for Sky Watch and Winter Solstice, under the Community Services budget. Ms. Ward seconded. All were in favor.

b. Conservation Land Admin: \$300 Easement Boundary Markers, \$119 Trail Supplies

Ms. Murphy said that right now we have boundary markers that say "Town of Exeter conservation land," but that doesn't make sense for easements that are privately owned, and she suggested getting new ones. Voss Signs has a cheaper boundary marker than the ones we have now. The remainder would go to trail supplies such as lumber and hardware.

MOTION: Mr. Campbell moved to authorize up to \$300 for easement boundary markers, and up to \$119 for trail supplies. Mr. Guindon seconded. All were in favor.

c. Education/Training: \$170 avail - \$60 NHACC 2-3 attendees incl. Carlos

Ms. Murphy said that Mr. Guindon is interested in attending NHACC, but there are still funds available for 2-3 other members to attend. This year, they're requesting an increase in the Training and Education budget, so she thinks they should expend the line item on this or another workshop as they go into budget season.

MOTION: Mr. Campbell moved to authorize up to \$170 for attending the NHACC meeting or another meeting. Ms. Ward seconded. All were in favor.

7. Correspondence

There was no correspondence discussed.

8. Other Business

There was no other business discussed.

9. Next Meeting

- a. Date Scheduled 11/12/19, Submission Deadline 11/1/19. Ms. Murphy said the location of this meeting will be at the Town Hall.

Adjournment

MOTION: Mr. Campbell moved to adjourn. Mr. Guindon seconded. All were in favor. And the meeting was adjourned at 8:10 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary