

Exeter Conservation Commission
December 10, 2019
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, Julie Gilman, and Kristen Murphy.

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. Event Request for the Conservation Center at Raynes Barn (Ben Anderson)

Ben Anderson described the proposed event, which would be a concert at the barn with seating outside. Ms. Ward asked about parking, and Mr. Anderson said he is expecting about 200 people but believes there would be enough parking; there are over 100 spaces available at the Word Barn. Mr. Piskovitz asked if the police would be involved, and Mr. Anderson said it depends on how the event shapes up. Mr. Piskovitz asked Mr. Campbell asked when the event would be, and Mr. Anderson said probably in the beginning of August, after the first hay cut.

MOTION: Mr. Koff moved that the Commission has reviewed Mr. Anderson's application and recommend the event be approved, with the note that Mr. Anderson will notify the Commission on the specifics and a date as they become known. Ms. Ward seconded. All were in favor.

2. Continued consideration of conservation easement on +/- 61 acres of land within Tax Map and Lots 98-37 and 80-18 surrounding the Ridge and the Boulders at RiverWoods development in accordance with the condition of approval issued by the Planning Board on June 5, 2008. (Sharon Somers)

Ms. Murphy said that this easement was issued conditional approval in 2008, and they've been working to get it implemented. In September, a Conservation Commission subcommittee was formed to review the agreement, and she, Mr. Guindon, and Mr. Campbell met and made some changes. They were presented to RiverWoods, who were supportive. She's looking for the Commission to accept the draft for presentation to the Select Board. Mr. Piskovitz asked if it had been reviewed by legal counsel, and Ms. Murphy said that was the next step after their approval.

Sharon Somers, legal counsel for RiverWoods, thanked the Conservation Commission for their consideration.

MOTION: Mr. Campbell moved that they have reviewed this proposal and recommend acceptance of the conservation easement for Tax Map and Lots 98-37 and 80-18, to go before the Select Board. Ms. Ward seconded. All were in favor.

3. Committee Reports

a. Property Management

i. Relinquishment of Claim to Deed from Book 2365 Page 489 by Robert Webb

Ms. Murphy said this was a tax deeded parcel that did not have a description associated. The owner, Robert Webb, approached Ms. Murphy about logging it. She believed that it was a conservation easement, but he had been paying taxes on it. The town reviewed the case and determined that the property was an easement. The case went before the Select Board, who agreed to pay him his back taxes, and he relinquished his claim.

ii. Conservation Fund Budget Recommendations Committee outcome and Conservation Plan Concept

Ms. Murphy discussed the presentation of the \$100,000 Conservation Fund allocation request to the BRC. She said that several members of the BRC suggested that it was the same burden to the taxpayers to get a bond, and they would have more money up front to work with. The BRC were also struggling with a 4% increase in the budget and were trying to find cost savings. Their vote was to reduce the allocation to \$50,000, and that's how it will go before the Select Board. Ms. Murphy said they have a good list of properties for consideration, and she suggested that before March a subcommittee should come up with a top three. They should also consider which properties may come in as partial donations. They could start the landowner outreach process.

Mr. Mattera said that if a developer is looking to develop land, they are supposed to look to a town's mitigation list before they go to ARM, but currently developers are skipping this step. Ms. Murphy said it would go a long way to have appraisals ready and have these properties queued up.

Mr. Short asked where the Land Use Change Tax goes, and Mr. Piskovitz said to the General Fund. Mr. Short said they could look at changing that. That source of funding, combined with a bond, could really move things along. Ms. Murphy said that Don Clement told her it was discussed and not supported in the past. The NHACC Handbook does have the language written out to approach the Select Board with if they were interested in pursuing it. It doesn't have to be all or nothing, they could take a portion of the Land Use Change Tax.

Ms. Gilman corrected the budget figure, saying that it's 3.1% increase, not 4%.

b. Trails

Mr. Short said that he and Mr. Campbell still have to finish the tunnel signs. They have all the materials and may be able to get to it soon. Mr. Campbell said there are a few that need to be dug in that will have to wait for a thaw. Ms. Murphy said they still have the Oaklands to do as well. Mr. Campbell asked when Eversource is leaving Raynes, and Ms. Murphy said the end of this week.

c. Outreach Events

i. Upcoming: 12/21 4-6 PM Winter Solstice Celebration @ Raynes Farm

Ms. Ward said that Ms. Murphy had the idea of an event with lanterns, which would be limited to 50 people as there would be a component inside the barn. This would celebrate the solstice and also highlight Raynes Farm. They are looking for someone to help with the bonfire. The DPW will either plow the parking lot or Parks and Rec will have a shuttle. Ms. Murphy said they had 50 reservations and more people interested in coming. Ms. Ward said her hope is that this will be the first annual solstice event.

Ms. Murphy said that the full moon snowshoe February 8th coincides with Deliberative Session, and she asked if members were okay with the overlap, but they had no concerns.

Ms. Murphy said they had the idea of "Open Barn" events at Raynes where people could play in the fields and come inside for some cocoa. It would be a good way to increase support for the farm. They could have monthly "Pop Up" events to work with snow days. Ms. Ward said she'd be more comfortable with fixed events so they could ensure volunteers were available. Ms. Raub said she would rather be flexible to work with the snowfall, and she could do an event in January. Mr. Koff said he'd be interested in the pop-up events so that they can avoid cancelling another event. Ms. Murphy said she'll announce a pop-up and look for registrants.

Ms. Murphy said Ben Anderson said he could put lights up at Raynes to draw attention in the winter, and the Commission liked that idea. Mr. Campbell thought putting lights on the barn or using garden lights along the path would also be nice.

Mr. Piskovitz asked Ms. Ward if there were updates on the Tree City USA process. Ms. Ward said all the requirements have now been met and the application has been submitted. They should hear back on the status in March.

4. Approval of Minutes: November 12, 2019

MOTION: Mr. Campbell moved to approve the minutes of November 12, 2019 as submitted. Ms. Ward seconded. All were in favor.

5. Correspondence

Mr. Koff said they got a request from a town consultant for permission to explore water resources on some of the conservation properties. The consultant would use equipment that would not disturb the ground. Ms. Murphy said this was related to the Drinkwater Road properties, and she had shared information with the consultant on the long-term limitations on those properties.

6. Other Business

Mr. Piskovitz said at the October 25th Planning Board meeting, they passed 4-3 a motion to allow the Town Planner or his designee to approve fertilizer waiver requests. Their discussion at the meeting was that they have faith in Dave Sharples and Ms. Murphy to make these determinations, but Mr. Piskovitz was concerned that they approved a position, rather than a specific person, to make the decision. Also, if it's done by one person in an office, that takes public comment out of the process. Ms. Raub said that she had been on the fertilizer committee and spent a lot of time calculating percentages, and Mr. Sharples and Ms. Murphy have the background and know-how to approve or deny it, more so than the Planning Board. Ms. Ward said she wanted the public to be able to weigh in.

Ms. Murphy said that in her opinion, the waiver provision is limited. Even with a waiver, fertilizer would still be prohibited within 100 feet of a shoreland district. The applicant would also still need to follow the state best management practices. Their proposal would need to show they're using a minimum of 50% slow release nitrogen and that it's phosphate free, unless soil testing showed it was depleted of phosphorous. There's very little decision making being made, just documenting that their management plan conforms to the guidelines. Mr. Campbell asked if this was for commercial purposes, and Ms. Murphy said this was only for heavily used turf. This came up because an organic lawn care company and PEA were unable to maintain their turf. This was a compromise between the science and being too strict. If there were a question about compliance, they would bring it back to the Planning Board.

7. Next Meeting

- a. Date Scheduled 1/14/20, Submission Deadline 1/3/20

Adjournment

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

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary