

Town of Farmington
Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 12, 2023
Municipal Office Building-2nd Floor
356 Main Street-Farmington, NH 03835

Commission Members Present:

Bill Fisher, Chairman
Richard Ballou, Vice Chairman
Blanche Tanner, Secretary
Penny Morin, Alternate Selectmen's Rep

Commission Members Absent:

Gerry Vachon, Selectmen's Rep., excused
Michael Harris

1). Call to Order:

Chairman Fisher called the meeting to order at 6 p.m.

2). Pledge of Allegiance:

All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

3). Public Comment:

Cherub Drive resident Jim Pollard said he periodically goes down on Bay Road going by the property he inquired about where they did the logging and the staging area for the logs. He said he was interested in getting permission to walk the property and even though others have said it's not posted so you can do that he always gets permission to go on someone's property. He gave a brief history of his hiking accomplishments over the past 5 years and noted his love of the outdoors and animals and he would like to help out if he can he just needs to get familiar with how everything operates.

Mr. Fisher asked if he was on the NH Chronicle TV show a couple of years ago and he recalled them doing a story about a gentleman that had done all the trails.

Mr. Pollard said that was not him and that he joined the Seacoast Day Hikers hiking club and they are a fantastic group and he has been hiking with them for 15 years.

Mr. Fisher asked if he knew Planning Board Chair Rick Pelkey and that he does a lot of hiking.

Mr. Pollard said he did not know Mr. Pelkey.

Mr. Pollard said when he worked, he started work at 6:30 a.m., finished at 5 p.m. then went to the gym to work out and he didn't get back until about 8:30 p.m. so he didn't know anyone in his neighborhood or in town because he went hiking on Saturday and Sunday was a recovery day for him. I love the outdoors and I was flabbergasted when I heard you were going to be getting that property he said.

Mr. Fisher said that is something he is really excited about and he has been talking to the family (donating the land) for almost 2 years and when you try to give away that much property other family members come out of the woodwork and that has all been taken care of.

Mr. Fisher said the biggest restriction to it will be no motorized vehicles will be allowed out there on the property.

Mr. Pollard asked what that would do to his little go cart.

Mr. Fisher said that would be allowed because it would be maintenance of the property but they can have mountain bicycle trails and he envisions hiking trails, snowshoe trails for the winter, picnic areas and maybe in the future some educational areas. He said he sees 2 entrances one off of Bay Road and one off of Spring Street and putting in 2 parking lots.

He said they will have to try to go across the Cocheco River somehow with some type of bridge but the state gets involved with that because of the wetlands permits and bridge permits, etc. but maybe they can get some kind of footbridge across it. He said the Cocheco cuts through about a third of the property all the way down to Spring St. from Bay Rd.

He said the Town might put in a well out there and they have talked about moving the Town wells towards this end of town instead of being along Rt. 11 and that would be good because the town needs a new well.

Ms. Tanner asked if Mr. Fisher happened to have an application for membership on the Con Com. and suggested Mr. Pauley might like to take it home and look it over.

Mr. Fisher said yes and gave an application to Mr. Pauley and asked him to fill it out and return it to the front desk downstairs, give it to any Selectman or give it to him and he will forward it to the Selectmen to vote on his appointment to the commission.

Mrs. Morin said it would be best to bring it in so the Selectmen would have it for their next meeting.

Mr. Pollard said he didn't mind being a public observer because he doesn't know the process and how you vote, etc.

Mr. Fisher said that's exactly what he did. He said they moved here in 2003 and 2013 he started joining the boards starting with the Con Com and listed all the boards/committees/groups he is or was a member of since then.

He said he was glad Mr. Pauley came to the meeting and he appreciated his interest.

Mr. Pollard said he was looking to get into something after he retired in 2020 and when the virus hit he couldn't leave the neighborhood and we are pretty much over that now so he thought he would like to get involved.

Mr. Fisher said they have several pieces of property they are trying to take care of and he hasn't be able to do too much lately but he likes to gather the trash at the Town Forest parking lot and the Con Com can take it to the Transfer Station and get rid of it free of charge. He said he also tries to go by the Dubois property on River Road which is hard to get to now because it's all blocked off and the bridge is out at the other end.

Mrs. Morin said it's a great place to walk if you want nice, quiet walks.

Mr. Pollard said when he is going to the Transfer Station he stops and picks up the beer bottles and he can't believe how many people are driving and drinking and now they have marijuana

and everything else in them now and that's why they getting these head-on collisions so he stays off the road Fri., Sat. and Sun. nights.

Mr. Fisher said he would give him some blue trash bags before he leaves the meeting and told him to put the trash in those bags, call him and he will bring them to the Transfer Station.

Mr. Pollard asked if he could bring the blue bags to the Transfer Station himself.

Mr. Fisher said not until he is a member of the Con Com. He said they also have the French property conservation area off of Hornetown Road which about a 1.5-2-mile hike along the perimeter of the 80-acre property and it has some vernal pools and a lot of wildlife. He said he planned to go out there this Saturday because the kiosk is getting buried in by tree limbs and he will try to cut them down and get rid of them.

He said there's also the 1.5-mile McCarthy Trail at the Public Safety Building and the library has put story boards out there for the kids to read a book as they go long and it's a nice little trail. He said the Town's original water tower is out there and it's still standing but it's closed off so you can't go inside because it needs some work and they don't want anyone to get hurt. He said it is a safe place for families to go and you can take your dog they just ask that you pick up after it.

4). Review of Minutes:

Dec. 8, 2022- Public Meeting Minutes - No errors or omissions

Motion: (Tanner, second Ballou) to accept the minutes as written passed 3-0-1 (Morin abstained).

5). Old Business:

Farmington 500 Club-Mr. Fisher said he didn't know if anyone had a chance to drive by Paulson Road and has seen the timber cutting, they did along the 500 Club areas. He said he got a letter from Randy Talon thanking them for meeting with him at their last meeting and he said it was pleasure for him to work with us and he appreciated how much they were willing to work with him to get that area cleaned up for the kids. He said the next thing would be getting a dozer out there and leveling that out which would probably be in the spring.

Intent to Cut- Tax Map R22, Lot 12-3, Poor Farm Road, 54 acres to be cut; start date: winter 2022 or spring 2023

Mrs. Morin said there is currently a weight restriction on that road from the flood.

Mr. Fisher said they will probably have to take it out in small portions. He said he knew that Poor Farm Road was closed because of the flooding and he guessed they got it back into commission.

Mrs. Morin said they put a culvert in but there is weight restriction right now because the ground is so soft.

Mr. Fisher said that is probably why they need to wait until spring.

Mrs. Morin said its open now but that culvert won't handle a lot of traffic so they'll have to go

one way or the other so as long as that's clear with the loggers.

Mr. Fisher said he was up there picking up trash after a family called and said they saw trash bags down by the river and Reservoir Road and they pulled them up out of there and put them by the side of the road. He said he went and picked them up and was thinking about how people can drive on these mud roads up here.

Mrs. Morin asked what they do with the intent to cut and if it was just letting them know.

Mr. Fisher said this is just letting them know and the Town will take care of it from here on out. He said this is a copy of the original that was filed with the Town and they have to talk to the land owner before they start cutting and moving stuff and he was sure they would see the posted signs and would probably contact the Town.

State Conservation Lands Inspection -Mr. Fisher said he received a report but did not make copies of it because it is quite extensive. He said every year the state comes out and looks at the Hills, Huppe, Menard, Smith and Whitman Trust lands and they walk those conservation lands to see if anything is going on with those lands that needs to be taken care of, make sure everybody is following the rules and no structures were put up that shouldn't be without permission, the markers are in place, etc. He said on all these properties there wasn't one issue and everything is in compliance and the report will be filed in the Commission files.

He passed the report to the members for review and said it includes pictures of the properties and that there are no issues, everything is great and nothing needs to be taken care of. He said there is one piece of property where the neighbor had stacked up a bunch of debris but that was worked out between the neighbors and they let them do it as it wasn't hurting anything and it created a good habitat for small critters so everybody was happy as long as it doesn't get any bigger and it will be monitored.

Dubois & French Properties Inspection- Mr. Fisher said these conservation properties were looked at and walked by Steven G. Walker of the Conservation Land Stewardship Program and the only issue was found at the French property and there are some pictures where it shows some growth around the kiosk in the parking lot. He said he was going to go out there if the weather is good on Sat. or Sun. and cut back the brush and haul it into the woods.

He said the Town did go out after he mentioned it to the Selectmen several months ago and they were out there mowing the ditches and they came through with a mower and cleaned up quite a bit along the frontage of the lot which is greatly appreciated as it saved him from having to do it with a weed eater.

BH Keith Contract - He said their contract with BH Keith & Assoc. (land manager & forester) has expired and Mr. Keith has expressed interest in renewing the contract. He said he was not too sure of the process and he has to check that out but he wanted the board to think about it. He said he was thinking about inviting Mr. Keith to a meeting to speak to them about what they do for the town and go over that because they have a new member he hopes is going to show up and he might like to know what BH Keith does before they decide to go with the contract again.

Mr. Fisher said according to their bylaws they have the authority to hire people as consultants like BH Keith and he also does work for them like putting in trails, taking care of the French property habitat areas, fertilizes the Dubois property fields and the Town Forest. He said he is going to help us with the 360 acres off of Bay Rd. and do a Phase One study of the boundaries, the topography, any hazards and although it won't be in-depth and down to the last detail it will give them a good handle on what the property can and can't be used for and what type of wildlife is out there and it is required to get insurance coverage. He asked the board to think about renewing the contract with BH Keith and plan to discuss it further at their next meeting. He said he didn't believe they had to put the work out to bid and they didn't do that the last time and they did a 2-year contract. He said he has had 2 contracts with them-one for the Town Forest and one for the French and Dubois properties and now that they've expired, he would like to bring those 2 together and he hoped to bring the new property into it but that is moving so slowly they might have to have a second contract with him for that.

He said he has to find out about the legalities of doing this and needs to talk to the Town Administrator and the Selectmen to see how to go about doing this and find copies of the original contracts. I wasn't Chairman at the time and I want to read through that and make sure we get what's needed for Farmington he said.

Phase One Study- Mr. Fisher said they talked about these 2 meetings ago and they authorized spending \$2,000 because at that time they thought that was what it was going to be to do a Phase 1 study and the money would be drawn from their conservation funds that come from taking properties out of Current Use. He said it doesn't affect the taxpayer dollars on our tax bills it comes from other funds from the Town.

He said he received an estimate from BH Keith and it's going to be \$3,500 and asked the board for a motion if they still wanted to go through this to change it from their authorization for \$2,000 to \$3,500.

Motion: So moved by Mr. Ballou and seconded by Ms. Tanner

Discussion: Mrs. Morin said they haven't actually contracted with him yet and asked if they need to contract with him before they agree to pay him.

Mr. Fisher said they were contracted for this one issue and this is an estimate that has come to us and the Planning Dept. has contacted and said unofficially this is what we need and they would like to know how much he wants to do this so they can come up with the funds and then they'll do the contract. He said Mr. Keith gave them a cost of \$3,500 which is very reasonable and just getting an engineer to take a look at building a house or a machine shop its thousands and thousands of dollars. He's always been very fair on his prices and has been very good to work with and he has made sure we're protected with everything he does he said.

He said if the motion is approved, they will enter into a contract with him to do this one particular task. He said they can't do any contract with anybody until the property is ours except for this Phase One study which is allowed by the state RSA's.

Vote: The motion passed 4-0.

Mr. Fisher said he would contact the Planning Director and inform him of the board's decision.

6). New Business:

New Members- Ms. Tanner said she hoped that new members will come on board because the Con Com really needs new members. She said next month's meeting will be her last so she hoped they would show up so they have a quorum to continue.

Mr. Fisher said they are down to 3 members showing up all the time and the Board of Selectmen rep. He said they allowed 7 members plus the Board of Selectmen rep and they are allowed 2 alternate members but they have no alternates. We need help desperately he said. He said there are so many things they used to do that he would like to get started on again but it is hard to do with the number of people they have.

Ms. Tanner said she didn't mind walking through the woods and picking up trash she just can't do a lot of heavy lifting. She said she will still watch their meetings and when they have activities going on in the spring and they're looking for help she'll be signing up.

She said she joined the Con Com because they were in need of a quorum and she felt bad so she joined. She said she didn't know anything about the Con Com when she joined and she watched the meetings but didn't really know the process but like everything else she has learned in this town she learned by doing and that is why she came. She said it has been a good time and she has learned a lot of things about conservation and what's been happening in town and part of that is just because she tries to be informed and come to the meetings. Thank you both for allowing me this years' experience she said.

Mr. Fisher said they enjoyed having her here especially when they were in a time of need and she showed up and it was greatly appreciated.

Mr. Fisher said he would like to get back to doing a couple of town cleanups a year and doing some lectures maybe once a quarter free to the town on things like gardening, horticulture, bee keeping, agriculture and whoever he can get to give us a lecture.


7). Upcoming Dates:

Next Meeting: Thursday, February 9, 2023

8). Adjournment:

Motion: (Ballou, second Tanner) to adjourn the meeting passed 4-0 at 6:36 p.m.

Kathleen Magoon, Recording Secretary


William "Bill" Fisher, Chairman