

Town of Farmington
Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, June 12, 2019

Commission Members Present:

Laura Bogardus, Chairman
Ann Titus, Selectmen's Rep.
Bill Fisher, Secretary
Michelle Elbert
Tom Sorensen

Others Present:

James Burdin, Interim Planner, SRPC

Commission Members Absent:

Randy Orvis, Vice Chairman
Richard Ballou

1). Call to Order:

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

2). Pledge of Allegiance:

All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

3). Public Comment: None

4). Discussion with the Interim Planner:

Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC) Regional Economic Development Planner James Burdin introduced himself and told the members he has been with SRPC since Jan. 2017 and that he does a lot of the economic development and land use work for SRPC. He said he was the Town Planner for Northwood and is currently the Interim Town Planner for Farmington. Mr. Burdin said he wished to speak with the members concerning two issues, one being an SRPC project and the other is a permit application to impact the Wetland Conservation Overlay District.

Mr. Burdin began with the wetlands permit issue and displayed several large copies of the site plans regarding an application from Thomas Cox which will be presented at the next Planning Board meeting. He said the hearing will involve 2 applications- one for Site Plan approval for a mixed use site with paved area for a construction company where Mr. Cox plans to process and store materials and store heavy equipment on site. Mr. Cox also proposes to construct a single unit dwelling on the upper level of the workshop/garage he said.

He said the driveway will access the property from Pound Road and will split off to the right leading to the company processing and storage area and the left branch of the driveway will lead up to the residence parking area.

Mr. Burdin said this issue is before the commission because in order to get to construction

business side of the property Mr. Cox will need to cross a wetland at a narrow point and there will be a culvert installed there. He said he understood this is a Class 3 wetland according to the Town's regulations so a buffer is not required and the applicant simply needs permission from the state to impact the wetland itself which he already has. My understanding is from verbal conversations only and I have not seen anything in writing from a licensed soil scientist or a wetlands specialist he said.

Mr. Fisher asked what size culvert the applicant plans to put in.

Mr. Burdin said the plans call for a 12" pipe.

Mr. Fisher said he believe the area is a seasonal wetlands and is classified as a Class 3 wetland because it dries up in the summer.

Mr. Burdin said the commission did not have to issue a formal approval or disapproval at this meeting and that they could make comments, ask questions or state any concerns that the Planning Board could take into account during their deliberations.

Mr. Fisher recused himself from the discussion as he is also a member of the Planning Board and this application will be coming before that board and he has some concerns about the size of the culvert. He left the table and sat in the audience during the rest of the discussion.

Mrs. Titus said she would prefer to see something in writing and asked if Mr. Burdin still wanted them to discuss this issue.

Mr. Burdin agreed and said the Planning Board will need to make a decision about the completeness of the application at their meeting next Tuesday. He said if they decide they don't have enough information they don't have to act at that meeting but they need to say it is complete or it is not complete and what materials they need to see.

He said it is up to the Commission to decide if they want to send any comments and if the case gets continued the Commission can request that they would like a chance to talk about it then. If the Planning Board decides the application is complete and to act on it at that meeting this may be your only chance to comment he said.

Mrs. Titus asked if he thought they were "jumping the gun" a little bit.

Mr. Burdin said if the members have any concerns that might be something to put in writing to the Planning Board without extensive comments at this time.

Consensus of the members was that without something in writing there is not enough information to make a decision.

Mrs. Elbert asked if the Planning Board decides they have enough information if they can make a decision with or without input from the Con Com.

Mr. Burdin said the application process says it needs to be forwarded to the Con Com for comment but it doesn't say they need to approve things or make decisions about the design, etc. He said he would hope that if the Con Com forwarded a formal written statement to the Planning Board about not having enough information and the need to know what type of wetland this is in writing that they would take that into account.

Chairman Bogardus said the Con Com doesn't have any say in the matter and they would be submitting their recommendations to the Planning Board. She said she would send a comment to them stating they don't have enough information to contribute anything right now.

Mr. Burdin asked that the comment be sent to the Land Use Assistant and she will forward it to the Planning Board.

Mrs. Titus requested that Chairman Bogardus talk to the Town Administrator to get his thoughts on the matter before putting anything in writing, submitting it to the Planning Board and potentially committing the Commission to future action.

Mr. Fisher rejoined the Commission.

Mr. Burdin said that SRPC received funding earlier this year for a project looking into recreation sites and the active transportation to those sites. He said they are working with all of the communities in this region to update the GIS layer for all of the sites in the region. The most recent time this was done was in 2008 or 2009 and it seems to be pretty outdated now he said. He said the second part of this project is working with the City of Somersworth to do an analysis of their recreation sites and whether or not people have access to them especially for the active transportation uses such as walking, biking, etc. We are hoping this will be a pilot project that we could use in our other communities in the future he said.

Mr. Burdin provided a list of recreational sites in Farmington and said the list has already been edited by the Rec. Dept. for their sites in town. He asked the Commission to review the conservation properties listed to see if any corrections or additions should be made.

He said some conservation lands have legitimate public access with recreational trails that the public is encouraged to use and there are other pieces while technically open to the public the public is not encouraged to use them such as lands put into conservation to protect a public well. He asked the members if there are any conservation lands that should be removed from the list so that they do not encourage the public to use them as recreation sites.

Mr. Fisher said the new McCarthy Trail at the Public Safety Building should be added to the list. Chairman Bogardus said she planned to send the list out to the members to get their recommendations for additions and omissions from the list. She said there are some properties that she is not sure if they are open to the public.

Mr. Fisher said he understood that if it is conservation land it is open to the public and that is one of the stipulations in putting a property into conservation.

Chairman Bogardus said she would like to look into that before making the list public. She asked Mr. Burdin if the street addresses for the sites were needed.

Mr. Burdin said he would like to have either the street addresses or the tax map and lot numbers for each of the parcels to be included on the list.

Mrs. Elbert asked who manages the former railroad tracks used by the snowmobilers.

Mr. Fisher said those trails are owned by the state and are managed by the snowmobile clubs.

Chairman Bogardus said this trail should be added to the list as it for recreational uses in

Farmington even though it is not owned by the Town.

Mr. Burdin said that once they have the regional layer put together they plan to put together a story map and give copies of the Farmington sites to the Town for public display.

Mr. Fisher recommended that Mr. Burdin talk with the Tri-City Trailblazers OHRV Club and that they could be found on Face book. He said the club members are trying to connect the trails from Somersworth through Rochester and Farmington and have already gotten agreements from several landowners who are willing to become part of the trail system.

He said that member Randy Orvis would be a good person to speak with regarding this topic.

Ms. Bogardus said she would find out the name of the snowmobile club as they may be able to provide maps of some of the trails on the list. She said she would collect all of the input from the members and forward it to Mr. Burdin.

She then thanked him for meeting with the Commission.

5). Review of Minutes:

May 8, 2019 – No errors or omissions

Motion: (Fisher, second Titus) to accept the minutes as written passed 5-0.

6). Old Business:

Hay Day – Chairman Bogardus said she submitted the application for the Commission's booth spaces at Hay Day. She said she has not heard back from the Seacoast Area Mobile Market (SAMM) van so she is not sure they are coming. She paid for 2 spots and asked the Asst. Rec. Director to hold a spot for the SAMM van in case they reply at the last minute she said.

Chairman Bogardus asked if anyone had any other ideas for their booth display.

Mrs. Elbert said she liked the idea of showing how bad wrapping paper is for the environment and volunteered to put together a display for their booth.

Later in the meeting the members also discussed plans to pick up the display items, looking into having some informational handouts and inviting a Moose Mountains Regional Greenways rep, a Forest Ranger and Smokey Bear to participate in the event at the Con Com booth.

Pump House Update- Mr. Sorensen said that about a week ago he began clearing some trees at the site of the old pump house on the McCarthy Trail to open up the site and make the pump house more visible from the trail as recommended by NH Fish and Game. He said he took the tree canopy up about 7' and cleared out the lower branches facing the water side so that when walking around the building you can look out toward the water.

He said he took down one pine tree directly in front of the pump house that was blocking the view of the building. After it came down he noticed that about 8 layers of brick and the entire cap on the building has been deteriorating and it looks like water has been getting down in between the layers and pushing the brick out at a dangerous angle he said.

Mr. Sorensen said there is a piece about 12' long and about 7-8 bricks thick that is ready to fall. He said he brought it to the attention of the Selectmen and planned to attend a Selectmen's

meeting to discuss the matter with the board.

He said he is ready to seal up the door and that would completely seal up the structure but had to set that work aside temporarily due to his job but he planned to return to the building and complete the task.

Mrs. Elbert asked if this is a Town problem.

Mr. Sorensen said it is Town property and is not conservation land. He showed the members a photo of the layer of the building that is about to fall that he took with his phone.

Mr. Fisher suggested it would be a good location for an educational center once it is fixed up. Schools could come in and hold classes there he said.

Mr. Sorensen said the area that he cleared would also make a good picnic area.

Mrs. Titus said the school just went on a field trip to the Great Bay Center and suggested they could do something similar at the pump house and have other schools pay to take class field trips to Farmington.

Mr. Sorensen noted the marsh area has a lot of habitats, wildlife and thick vegetation. He said on their last walk of the trail they also noticed that there is some trail maintenance needed there as there is some Bittersweet and Autumn Olive that they would like to get control of before it gets "carried away".

Mrs. Elbert suggested they need to plan a work party in the fall.

Chairman Bogardus said she met with the Boy Scouts to try to get them to assist with maintenance of the trails and they are interested in helping with the work. She said she loves the McCarthy Trail but it is Town property and asked how much they want to get involved with maintaining that trail when they also have the trails on the conservation lands to maintain.

Mrs. Elbert said she wondered if they would be able to get help from UNH Extension during one of their work days which are not restricted to conservation lands. She said she would speak with someone at UNH and get back to the members with more information.

Mr. Sorensen said he was told that UNH Extension also has a grant program for repairing historic buildings.

Mrs. Titus said there is masonry work needed at the pump house and there are a lot of talented people in town. If they could get the project approved by the Selectmen they may be able to get some people in town to do that she said.

Mr. Fisher and Mr. Sorensen warned of insurance and liability issues with this type of work.

Mrs. Titus pointed out that Mr. Sorensen is on the Con Com and has been out there working and asked what the difference is (between that and having a volunteer do the work). She suggested if the volunteers became alternate members of the Con Com or members of a subcommittee of the Con Com they could assist with some of the work and the Town might be covered for liability issues.

Ms. Bogardus said if it was done by a mason they would know how to perform the work properly and safely. We need someone who knows what they are doing because it is a

dangerous situation right now she said.

Mr. Sorensen said there is water coming out at the bottom level too and at this point they don't even know if it is worth doing as the extent of the damage is unknown.

Chairman Bogardus said this issue is on the agenda for the next Selectmen's meeting on Monday. There are so many possibilities but first we have to make the building safe she said.

Mrs. Titus said if Selectmen decide to get an experienced person to give them a more detailed description of what is needed to repair the structure and an estimate for the work, they could put it out to the public asking for volunteers to do the work. She estimated that if they could get 4 or 5 guys together it could be done in a month without much cost to the Town.

Mr. Sorensen said he will take more photos of the pump house and post them on Face book to try and raise interest in the project. He said they would also need to research the history of the building and try to find out when it was built.

Mr. Fisher said that eventually the story boards will be put up at the trail and kids will want to go there and have their pictures taken with the characters.

Chairman Bogardus said she would contact the person at Home Depot who is constructing the characters and get a status report.

Church Anniversary – Mrs. Elbert asked if the Commission would be participating in the First Congregational Church's Bicentennial Anniversary on June 22.

Chairman Bogardus said she attended the church's last committee meeting and told them the Commission did not have enough time to pull something together for the celebration. If we could put something together in time I'm sure they would take a display board she said.

Mrs. Elbert said if she happened to see Dottie Bean she would ask her if she has any information on local history they could use on a story board.

Mrs. Titus said they could show their support for the church by attending the celebration (and chicken BBQ) and plan to participate in next year's celebration.

Chairman Bogardus said the problem was with the drastic date change for the event.

Mrs. Elbert said if they could make it part of Hay Day it would be a little easier to work with.

Chairman Bogardus said the church will have some historic items on display which are on loan from the NH Farm Museum and Ms. Bean's barn.

7). New Business: None

8). FYI:

Mr. Fisher read aloud the following Intent to Cut Notices:

Tax Map R64-011 and R64-012, 38 acres on Route 11, 10 acres to be cut;

Tax Map R72-014, (no street address or acreage given);

Tax Map R30-001, 50 acres to be cut on Pound Road.

9). Upcoming Dates:

June 13 – Timber Talk, 6 p.m. at the Public Safety Building

July 10 – July Con Com Meeting, 6 p.m. in the Municipal Office Building

10). Adjournment:

Motion: Sorensen, second Elbert) to adjourn the meeting passed 5-0 at 7 p.m.

Respectively submitted

Kathleen Magoon

Recording Secretary

Laura Bogardus, Chairman