

Town of Farmington
Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, November 13, 2019

Commission Members Present:

Laura Bogardus, Chairman
Randy Orvis, Vice Chairman
Bill Fisher, Secretary
Ann Titus, Selectmen's Rep.
Tom Sorensen

Commission Members Absent:

Richard Ballou, excused
Michelle Elbert, excused
Larry Fitzgerald

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). Review of Minutes:

October 9, 2019 – No errors or omissions

Motion: (Fisher, second Titus) to accept the Wed., Oct. 9, 2019 minutes as written passed 5-0.

5). Old Business:

By-laws – Chairman Bogardus asked if the members reviewed the bylaws and had any recommended changes.

Mr. Fisher said the bylaws do not contain the date they were adopted or a signature page for the commission members and that he found a minor typo on Page 7, Paragraph C, Procedures for Wetlands Dredge and Fill Permit, #1 (change "fro" to "from"). He suggested that a search of the past meeting minutes may result in a date the bylaws were adopted.

Mr. Fisher noted that the document also does not contain the Selectmen's signatures or the date they were approved by the Selectmen as the final authority for approval of the bylaws. Consensus of the commission was to add the items recommended by Mr. Fisher.

Mr. Orvis recalled that he was a Con Com member for a long time before any bylaws were adopted and that it may have been when the Town Clerk's daughter was the Chairman.

Mr. Fisher suggested they adopt the bylaws now and send them to the Selectmen for approval. Ms. Bogardus said the members were scheduled to discuss any possible changes at this meeting and vote on the revised bylaws at their next meeting so she would make the recommended corrections/additions for the next meeting.

Mr. Orvis asked what the bylaws say about removing a member for not attending meetings. Chairman Bogardus said the bylaws state a member who is absent without excuse 50% or more

of the meetings in any 6 month period can be asked to resign or be removed by the Selectmen. Mr. Fisher read that the section also has a second condition where a member with 4 unexcused absences in any 60 day period can be asked to resign or be removed.

Mr. Orvis asked if the members agreed with these conditions.

Chairman Bogardus asked if Mr. Orvis wanted to increase the conditions for member removal.

Mr. Orvis said he thought that the number of unexcused absences allowed should be less.

Ms. Bogardus asked if to be an excused absence the member would simply have to notify the Chair that they would not be at the meeting.

Mr. Orvis said if the member notified the Chair of their absence at an upcoming meeting that most likely they would have some type of legitimate excuse. He said there have been a few instances in the past where they weren't really sure if they could ask a member to resign.

Mr. Fisher said one other set of bylaws contained language that said a member may be removed from the commission at the discretion of the Board of Selectmen with a Public Hearing if requested by the member. He said another commission's bylaws state that a member can be removed by a majority vote of the commission members.

Mr. Orvis said that doesn't seem right as the Con Com only has advisory authority to the Selectmen and that it is more likely that the members could only request the "impeachment" of the member by the Selectmen. He said he brought this up because he wanted to know if the members thought what they have in their bylaws on this topic is adequate.

Mr. Sorensen said he wouldn't mind upping the requirements on attendance so they can make an effective difference in town instead having people who show up here or there and help out here or there. He said he also would add something that would ask a new member without any experience or background to take classes or attend meetings (NHACC, Master Gardeners, etc.) within their first 6 months as a member to be better informed about conservation issues and as a way of showing their intent to be a productive member.

Mr. Fisher said once the person is a member they are a member whether they go to classes or not as there is nothing in the bylaws that would allow them to kick out that member. He suggested before adding a requirement like this that they talk it over with the Selectmen.

Mr. Orvis said he didn't want to go as far as to have mandatory education requirements.

Mr. Sorensen said it could be worded to encourage new members to take at least 2 of the courses offered to the Con Com from outside sources within their first 6 month as a member.

Mrs. Titus suggested the addition of a mission statement and to include as part of the application process that the Selectmen would ask what their intent is as a commission member.

Mr. Fisher said the application currently asks the potential member for their experiences that would warrant them being on the board.

Chairman Bogardus said she appreciates people who volunteer but that they really need people who will do things.

Mr. Sorensen said they are looking for people who will step forward and look for knowledge

and where they can help make a difference now that they are part of the commission. He said there should be some kind of basic “new member 101” for when they come on board.

Mr. Fisher said he didn’t think it would work in practice as potential members would say “If I need to go to training to be on this board then I’m not going to be on this board”.

Mr. Orvis said the member doesn’t have to go off anywhere and could participate in forums set up by this commission.

Mrs. Titus suggested that when someone asks for an application to be appointed to the commission that they receive a packet of information about what the commission does and the expectations of the members. The person would be asked to go home and read it and if they are still interested in being a member to come back and fill out the paperwork she said.

Mr. Fisher said he was tired of it always being the same members who participate in the Con Com events such as at Hay Day, the clean-ups, etc. People want to be on the commission but they don’t want to spend the time to do the work on the outskirts of the commission he said.

Mr. Sorensen asked if they could ask the new member to participate and take some sort of responsibility in at least one event/activity put on by the commission.

Mrs. Titus said this would probably have to be reviewed by legal counsel.

Mr. Fisher suggested that they as a board could go to the member that is slacking and take him/her and aside and say we expect you to help us with the work but if not maybe you should resign. He agreed with Mrs. Titus’ suggestion for a handout with expectations/duties of board members and to include it on the Con Com section of the Town website.

Chairman Bogardus said it would also be a good idea to suggest that potential members come to a few meetings first before applying for membership just to see if they are interested in doing it. She added that she can’t force anyone to participate but they can’t get all the things done they want to do without more participation.

Mr. Orvis wondered what the Selectmen would say about the Con Com having the ability to ask a member to resign included in their bylaws.

Mr. Fisher said the bylaws say the Chairman can delegate tasks and appoint members to ad hoc committees at their discretion. You need to say “Bill, I want you to go to this training” he said.

Mrs. Titus said they could tell the person they think it would be good for them to go to this training as it would help them to understand something better. She suggested that she and Ms. Bogardus form a subcommittee to discuss what they can do to be proactive in educating potential members before they come on board and keeping them as active and participating members of the board.

Chairman Bogardus said if someone was not attending all of the meetings and was still doing things in the background she would not have a problem with that.

Mrs. Titus suggested they keep the provision about 4 unexcused absences in the bylaws.

Mr. Fisher said the requirement reads 4 unexcused absences in a 60 day period and the Con Com only meets once a month so it is not possible to have 4 unexcused absences in 60 days. He

suggested they get remove this provision line and keep the one stating a member absent without excuse from 50% or more of the meetings in any 6 month may be requested to resign. Consensus of the members was to keep item b (The member is absent without excuse from 50% or more of the meetings in any 6 month period) and to strike item a (The member had 4 unexcused absences in any 60 day period) (Page 3, Section B 2).

Mr. Fisher asked about the handbook for Municipal Conservation in NH (Page 3, Section B Duties of Members, #1).

Chairman Bogardus said that later in the meeting she intended to discuss getting copies for all of the current members and to give one to new members in a new member packet.

Mr. Fisher said they could also create their own library of reference materials in their storage room on the 2nd floor of the Municipal Office Building and loan a book out to someone thinking of becoming a member.

Chairman Bogardus suggested two books that she would like available to new members and as part of the library would the Municipal (Conservation) Fund Guidebook and the Handbook for NH Municipal Conservation Commissions as they are both very informative. She said hard copies are still available for \$10 a copy.

Motion: (Fisher, second Titus) to spend \$100 to buy 10 copies of the Handbook for NH Municipal Conservation Commissions;

Discussion: Mrs. Titus asked if they had enough money in their budget to purchase the books and the cameras discussed previously.

Chairman Bogardus said there is enough money in the budget (\$787) for both purchases.

She asked if the members also wanted to provide copies of the Municipal Fund Guidebook.

Mr. Sorensen said the guidebook would be more useful for the Chair, Secretaries or Treasurers and questioned the need for each of the members to have a copy.

Chairman Bogardus suggested they have one copy of the guidebook in their library and allow new members to borrow it when they come on board.

Mrs. Titus suggested they find out the cost for each copy and if there is a copyright prohibiting copying of the book.

Vote: The motion passed 5-0.

Motion: (Titus, second none) to accept the bylaws as amended;

The motion died for lack of second.

Mr. Fisher asked if they should first find out from the Selectmen if the Con Com can remove a member and if they can to include it in the bylaws and vote on them at the next meeting.

Chairman Bogardus said she would like to do some research on any proposed changes.

Mr. Fisher said it may be possible to add a paragraph stating that a member can be removed for cause at the discretion of the Selectmen or by a majority vote of the Con Com with the approval of the Selectmen. He said they would have to talk to legal counsel and make sure that it is legal.

Chairman Bogardus asked if the commission would come up with causes for removal

(unexcused absences, lack of participation?) or if that would be done by the Town Attorney.

Mrs. Titus suggested Chairman Bogardus e-mail the questions about the proposed changes to the Town Administrator and he could consult with the Town Attorney on the issues.

Fall Clean Up – Chairman Bogardus said 7 people came out to participate in the cleanup which resulted in approx. 520 lbs. being removed from the Spring Street roadsides. She said she would like to figure how to get more people to volunteer to help with the biannual cleanups.

Mrs. Titus said a lot of hard work was done but that she had fun doing it and helping out.

Mr. Sorensen said it was really nice of the Town Administrator and Mrs. Titus to come out and participate in the trash pickup.

Mrs. Titus suggested they consider offering an incentive such as a gift card to increase participation in the event.

Mr. Fisher suggested holding a raffle with a basket of conservation-related items or gift cards from local businesses as a prize for one of the volunteers.

Mr. Sorensen suggested there be numerous prizes so the majority of the volunteers would get a prize.

Chairman Bogardus recalled that Mrs. Titus and Mrs. Elbert had a previous discussion about providing some type of reward to the kids who have been cleaning up streets on their own.

Mrs. Titus said they could advertise a Family Day and encourage people to bring their kids out to help with the cleanup and provide them with the blue conservation trash bags and a gift certificate to a local restaurant.

Chairman Bogardus said they would need to decide if that would be part of the spring or fall cleanup or for a cleanup the families did on their own.

Mr. Fisher expressed concern about handing out the blue bags to people only to have them used to clean out their own garage, etc. He said that some people have posted their efforts to clean their own streets on Face book and that the Tri-City Trailblazers ATV Club has been cleaning trash from the trails and he would love to find a way to support that but he didn't like handing out bags to people especially with the limited supply of bags available.

Mr. Orvis suggested they could sponsor an adopt a section of a road (or a whole road) program similar to the state program and the **Economic Development Committee's Adopt-a-Spot** program.

Mr. Sorensen said he felt that giving out incentives would incentivize people to clean out their garages and that once a year they could hold a press conference and recognize the volunteers and express appreciation for their help.

Mr. Fisher said they could keep a list of the volunteers and invite them to a cookout during the summer for those people who have participated in the cleanups or the adopt-a-spot program.

Mr. Sorensen said they could call it "Volunteer Appreciation Day".

Mr. Orvis said that Farmington is already nationally famous for the Police Dept. giving out "tickets" (gift certificates) for doing good deeds and asked if the commission could do

something similar.

Mrs. Titus said there are a lot of good people in this town and gave the example of a friend's little boy who is collecting recyclables and made arrangements for a disposal company to pick up the recyclables at their nearby dumpster. It is things like that I want to praise she said.

Chairman Bogardus said they would have to figure out how they would find out about these things and how to set up some type of recognition program.

Mr. Fisher said they could try to set up a tab at Crowley's Variety and Grill for certain amount, (i.e. \$50) and draw up tickets good for 1 slice of pizza and hand them out until that \$50 was used up.

Mr. Sorensen said he liked the cookout idea but didn't know how they would set it up so that volunteers from both cleanups would be included if they held it in the summer. He added that he would like to invite people who do things on their own such as the little boy Mrs. Titus mentioned and suggested they could put a post on Face book asking people who they know that should be recognized for their efforts.

Chairman Bogardus asked the members how they would like to move forward with these ideas.

Mr. Fisher suggested talking to the Town Administrator and the EDC Chair about the Adopt-a-Spot program about how the program is administered and its rules.

Mr. Orvis said the EDC recently adopted new rules and an application form for the program. He said he told them that the Con Com may be interested in doing something similar but the EDC members did not feel they were able to take on anything more at this time and that the Con Com would have to administer the possible offshoot of the program themselves. He said he would get copies of the new paperwork for the local Adopt-a-Spot program and the state regulations for their adopt a road program for the commission.

Mr. Sorensen asked if the person/business that adopts a spot is responsible for keeping it clean.

Mr. Orvis said it is not mandatory but if you put a sign with your business name on it and don't maintain the spot it is not going to look good for your business. He said some of the bigger companies pay people to take care of their spots but he noticed that the best cared for spots are usually those spots adopted by a family.

Mr. Fisher said the commission could supply the blue trash bags to anyone that adopts a spot/road for trash pickup and make arrangements with the Transfer Station to let those people dispose of the trash free of charge as they doing it on behalf of the Con Com. He said he previously spoke unofficially to an attendant there who said they would need authorization from the Town Administrator to allow for the free disposal of trash.

Mrs. Titus suggested the creation of neighborhood cleanup groups where the neighbors on a street would organize their own trash pickups as needed.

Chairman Bogardus said all of the ideas are really good and it is matter of figuring out how to do them.

Mr. Fisher said that maybe something could be worked out with the Transfer Station where not

only just the blue bags were accepted for free trash disposal as the commission is limited to 10 free cases of bags a year and they cannot purchase more. If we give out all our blue bags we won't have any for the fall cleanup he said.

Chairman Bogardus asked if the Con Com could use another type of bag instead of the blue bags for the spring/fall cleanups.

Mr. Fisher said the state makes the bags available as an incentive for the Con Com's around the state to participate and if the citizen participation catches on they may end up short of bags. He said he was against giving out the blue bags to the public as they could be used for anything and everything.

Chairman Bogardus said if they run out of blue bags the attendants at Transfer Station would know that people bringing other bags of trash on the cleanup days were volunteers helping the commission so she would rather give the blue bags out to known people who are adopting a spot or a road during the year.

Mrs. Titus said they could also limit the public participation to the "no snow season" making it more likely there would be enough blue bags for the Con Com's spring/fall cleanups. She said the Transfer Station accepts clear bags and they could come up with a sticker to notify the Transfer Station that the user has free disposal.

Mr. Sorensen said stickers would be abused even more than the free disposal with the blue bags and then suggested they stick with the biannual cleanups and not take on anything more. He said if somebody wants to help out they do it on their own and get appreciation for it but we should keep it 100% separate from the Con Com because if they are taking in their household garbage it's all going to fall on us.

Mr. Orvis asked how much metal they have cleaned up from the roadsides during the fall and spring cleanups which could be sold to the Metal Farm.

Chairman Bogardus said that not a lot of metal has been picked up off the roadsides during the cleanup events.

Mr. Fisher suggested they take it one step at a time and start with some type of adopt-a-spot program for trash pickup and then possibly move on to some of the other participation and appreciation ideas. If we try to do it all at once we will burn ourselves out he said.

NHACC Annual Meeting – Chairman Bogardus said that Mr. Ballou attended the annual meeting but he was not able to attend this meeting.

Any Other Old Business – Mr. Orvis said he planned to get copies of the survey and feasibility study from Norway Plains regarding a possible handicapped fishing spot on the Ronci property but has not had the chance to do so. He said he would like to look at the potential for putting a picnic/fishing spot at that part of the river and making the access a little easier even if they can't install a handicapped access there.

Map Workshop – Mrs. Titus said the workshop held to identify the conservation easement properties in town went well with everyone doing a little bit of everything.

Chairman Bogardus agreed and that she appreciated the assistance from (former Con Com Chair) Dave Connolly. She said she would compile the information and forward it to the Interim Planner.

Mr. Orvis asked how many conservation properties in town weren't included on the map. Chairman Bogardus said they found that the lot across from the Town Forest, the new easement at the Town former landfill site, Paulson Road, the Town Pound, McCarthy Park (Pound Road), Northern Land Traders (River Road -3 acre piece abutting Cameron's Garden Center), a small piece at the 500 Boys' and Girls' Club, the Minnis property (Meaderboro Road) and New Dam (Bay Road) were not included on the existing conservation map.

6). New Business:

Barry Conservation 4-H Camp – Chairman Bogardus said flyers have been posted at the Henry Wilson School looking for a camper to attend camp this summer. Request for a slot is required by Feb. 3 at a cost of \$510 for a full week and an opening for a sponsored camper is available during the 4H on the Wild Side or North Country Adventure sessions she said.

Motion: (Fisher, second Orvis) to send one child to Barry Conservation 4H Camp and to spend \$510;

Discussion: Mrs. Titus asked about the process to choose the student camper.

Chairman Bogardus said that the sponsorship is available to Henry Wilson School students in grades 4-8 who qualify for the free school lunch program as there is an income requirement and interested students can apply through their guidance counselor at the school. The candidates are requested to write an essay about why they want to go to camp and then read their essays to the commission at the Jan. 8, 2020 Con Com meeting when the chosen camper will be announced she said.

Mrs. Titus asked if any of the members have ever visited the camp.

Chairman Bogardus said she thought that former Chairman Dave Connolly visited the camp which is located at the Berlin Fish Hatchery in Berlin, NH.

Vote: The motion passed 5-0.

New Cameras – Mr. Sorensen said they were looking to purchase 2 new cameras - one to replace an old camera and one to allow the placement of a second camera on a property if need be. He said the old camera does not have much photo capacity, has a very short battery life and is on its way out.

Mr. Orvis estimated that the camera is at least 10 years old and that the new cameras have come down in price since that camera was purchased.

Mr. Sorensen said the 2 cameras will come with 2 camera boxes, four 16 GB SD memory cards, 2 cable systems to lock the cameras to a tree and 2 external battery packs at a cost of \$389. Discussion also included whether to buy larger capacity SD cards for the other 5 cameras to increase their photo capacity.

Mr. Sorensen said the existing cameras will support the new SD cards and suggested they also

purchase 2 8GB SD cards for use with the rest of the cameras.

Motion: (Fisher, second Orvis) to spend no more than \$50 to buy replacement SD cards for the existing cameras passed 5-0.

Motion: (Fisher, second Titus) to spend \$389 to purchase 2 new outdoor cameras and associated equipment;

Discussion: Mrs. Titus asked how much money is their budget and if they could use more cameras.

Chairman Bogardus said there is \$787 in the budget.

Mr. Sorensen there are enough cameras at the other properties and one of the new ones is to replace the oldest camera and the other is a stand-by in case there is problem with one of the other cameras or a situation where another camera is needed on one of the properties.

Mr. Fisher said with what they have already spent tonight there is approx. \$200 in the budget and there is still 2 months left in this budget period.

Vote: The motion passed 5-0.

Any Other New Business – None

7). FYI:

Notice of Intent to Cut: Tax Map R04, Lot 10; Places Crossing Road; lot size-22.9 acres; 3 acres to be cut; owner & logger- Mike Stewart; cutting 50 cords of firewood.

Mr. Orvis said if you are cutting firewood off your own property you still have to file an Intent to Cut form. The state has got to get their tax he said.

8). Upcoming Dates:

December 11, 2019 – December Con Com Meeting at 6 p.m.

9). Adjournment:

Motion: (Titus, second Sorensen) to adjourn the meeting passed 5-0 at 7:35 p.m.

Respectively submitted

Kathleen Magoon

Recording Secretary

Laura Bogardus, Chairman