

Town of Farmington
Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, December 11, 2019

Commission Members Present: Chairman Laura Bogardus, Vice Chairman Randy Orvis, Secretary Bill Fisher, Selectmen's Rep. Ann Titus, Michelle Elbert, Richard Ballou, Tom Sorensen, 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 November Minutes:

November 13, 2019 – Public Meeting Minutes - No errors or omissions

Motion: (Titus, second Fisher) to accept the minutes as written passed 5-0-3 (Ballou, Elbert, Fitzgerald abstained).

5). Old Business:

a). Con Com By-Laws – Chairman Bogardus said she sent the revised by-laws to the members by e-mail that day and also provided them with paper copies with the changes highlighted in gray.

Mr. Orvis said he would like to add some additional changes to by-laws.

Chairman Bogardus asked if the commission still had time to make more changes before it is reviewed and approved by the Board of Selectmen.

Mrs. Titus said the Selectmen have been meeting every Monday and she thought that there is still time to make additional changes. She said the revised document should be given to the Town Administrator to forward to legal review and asked if the Town Administrator had set a date when the by-laws must be submitted to him.

Chairman Bogardus said the Town Administrator did not set a date for submittal of the by-laws.

Mr. Orvis said the changes he wished to make are on Page 1, Article V- Duties and Functions Relative to Purpose, Paragraph 1 and are as follows: 4th line – add “/community” following “historic”; 5th line – add “environmentally/ecological before “significance” and to encompass ecological importance into Paragraph 2.

Article XII – Meetings - Page 7, C, Conduct of Meetings, last paragraph – Mrs. Elbert questioned the wordiness of the paragraph and asked if a member could have 4 unexcused absences from less than 50% of the meetings (the line states 4 unexcused absences from 50% or more meetings in a 6 month period).

Members asked for further clarification.

Mr. Fisher said the members determined that the commission could request a member to resign or be removed if the member is absent without excuse from 50% or more of the meetings in any 6 month period and that the language regarding 4 unexcused absences be removed.

Mr. Ballou said this same language is also found on Page 4, Article IX, Members, B, Duties of Members, Paragraph 2.

Motion: (Ballou, second Orvis) to combine the 2 sentences in Section B, Article IX and eliminate the section in Article XII, C that is highlighted in gray because it is redundant and doesn't belong there passed 8-0.

No other amendments were made.

Chairman Bogardus said she would submit a copy of second draft to the Town Administrator.

b). New Cameras – Chairman Bogardus said this item is on the agenda to let the members know that the new cameras were purchased and received. Everything looks to be in order and now they need to be installed she said.

c). Handbooks –Chairman Bogardus said the members received copies of the NH Municipal Assoc. Con Com Handbook and any future new members will get a copy of the handbook and there will also be a copy of the handbook in the Con Com library at the Municipal Offices. She said it was \$100 for the 10 handbooks plus a \$30 shipping charge which has been paid.

d).SRPC Conservation Maps – Members received copies of 2 spreadsheets listing the names, addresses, lot numbers, and size of the privately owned and Town owned conservation lands. Chairman Bogardus said that the **Stafford Regional Planning Commission** was unable to find 2 parcels – one of which is the New Dam property (Bay Road) and they were not sure where the 18 acres are located.

Mr. Orvis said the acreage is parallel to the road.

Ms. Bogardus said the Assessing Clerk sent her the tax map with location of the lot clearly marked and that she sent the tax map to the SRPC.

She said the other property they were not sure of is the 6.5 acre parcel belonging to the 500 Boys and Girls Club (Paulson Road) and that the easement location is still “up in the air”. All the rest of information should be fine she said.

Chairman Bogardus said she asked about the cost of the new maps and was told it would be about \$300-\$400 total once everything is completed.

Mrs. Titus asked if the SRPC needed to talk to the president of the club to get the information they are looking for.

Chairman Bogardus said the Assessing Clerk is looking into it.

Mr. Orvis recalled that this is a portion of their property that they can't develop because it goes out into the swampy area next to brook. He said he thought the easement is located between the developed ball fields and where the composting place is located (where the brook is).

Mr. Sorensen suggested it is the little piece of property with the knoll between the fields and the road where all of the tall pines are.

Mr. Orvis said that is the 50' buffer that had to be left there by state law when the property was used as a gravel pit. He said the club does not have to leave it there as it is no longer a gravel pit and they can develop it into ball fields if they want to unless there is conservation easement on it.

Chairman Bogardus said the Assessing Clerk said the location of the easement is not clear and that she would do some research on it. There is also a discrepancy in the total acreage of the parcel because of a boundary line adjustment that wasn't recorded she said.

Chairman Bogardus said the commission hasn't discussed the cost of the maps with SRPC and asked the members how they felt about expending this money since they have already put work into it. She said this is the 5 year update and this needs to be done as there were a lot properties not included on the existing conservation maps.

Mr. Orvis said he thought the Planning Board is the body that does the actual contract with SRPC.

Chairman Bogardus then asked if the Planning Board or the Con Com would pay for the maps.

Mr. Fisher, who is also a member of the Planning Board, said he believed that the Town contracts with SRPC as he did not remember the Planning Board taking a vote to contract with SRPC. He said no board/committee can contract with any business and it has to be done through the Board of Selectmen.

Mrs. Titus said because the commission was asking to have the maps updated she thought it would come out of the commission's budget. She suggested Chairman Bogardus ask the Town Administrator about the proper body that should pay for the maps.

Mr. Fisher said the Con Com paid for the original overlays for conservation areas and he felt that it would make sense for the Con Com to pay for the updates.

Mrs. Elbert said she would like clarification before they agree to pay this amount.

Mrs. Titus asked who put the call out to update the map – if the Con Com asked SRPC to update the map or did the SRPC come to the Con Com for help.

Mr. Fisher said he thought it is part of the revision of the Master Plan and if so it should come from the Planning Board budget.

Mrs. Titus said she would ask the Town Administrator and send the answer to Chairman Bogardus by e-mail or provide the answer to commission at their next meeting.

Mr. Fisher noted that the budgets close out on Dec. 31 and asked if they could spend the money in January which when their next meeting is.

Chairman Bogardus said she believes that the money for the maps would come from the conservation fund and not from the Con Com's budget so they would be able to pay for it when it is completed.

Mr. Orvis disagreed and said it should come their budget and not from the fund.

Mr. Fisher said the Town can expend funds for the normal operation of the town until the new budget is approved in March but spending to update conservation maps would be beyond that. That means we have to spend that money now and not in January unless we encumber it he said.

Chairman Bogardus said the commission would not be able to pay for the maps from the operating budget as there is only \$175 left in the budget.

Mr. Fitzgerald asked if the commission paid for maps if it would be possible to get that money back if the SRPC made a mistake.

Mr. Fisher said the SRPC came to the Con Com seeking assistance with updating the maps and because that is part of the contracted services for the revision to the Master Plan the Planning Dept. should pay for it. The money for updating the Master Plan has already been approved and SRPC is working to update the maps that go with the Master Plan he said.

Mrs. Titus said she would take the members questions to the Town Administrator.

Chairman Bogardus then suggested they table this issue until their next meeting.

e). Any Other Old Business – Mr. Fisher said it has been 10 weeks since he had a cigarette!

6). New Business:

a). Forum Ideas – Chairman Bogardus asked the commission to start thinking about forum ideas again as it has been a few months without one and that she would like to get them going again.

Mr. Orvis said it has been a while since they have done some of the forums they have done in the past and they may want to do some repeats.

Mr. Fisher said spring comes each year right after winter and suggested that a forum on the lead abatement program for the protection of the loons be held in February before people begin fishing season. He said the state law has changed to prohibit the use of lead sinkers and that NH Fish and Game may be willing to provide a speaker on this topic.

Mr. Orvis said this also applies to the use of lead shot gun shells.

Chairman Bogardus asked Mr. Fisher to look into this and if he is successful in finding a speaker they would help him put together a forum on the topic.

She said she sent e-mails to the UNH Forestry Program seeking someone to give a talk in the Town Forest in the spring or summer. She said she saw that another county is doing a forestry management talk that day which inspired her to try to set one up again in town and let people see how the Town Forest is developing since the last time they were there.

Chairman Bogardus then encouraged the members to let her know if they find potential topics or speakers so they can get the forums going again.

Mr. Orvis suggested they host an invasive species forum before planting season begins.

Mrs. Elbert asked if there is a spot in town with an invasive species present where they could demonstrate the correct way to remove them.

Chairman Bogardus said the McCarthy Trail (behind the Public Safety Building) has a few invasive species and the Leary property which will soon be conservation property may be good

candidates for a “pull”.

Mrs. Elbert said there is also a good crop of bittersweet towards the end of Poor Farm Road near Meaderboro Road.

Chairman Bogardus said a potential pull site would not have to be conservation land but would have to be Town property.

Mr. Sorensen said there is some multiflora rose along the bridge on the French property.

Chairman Bogardus said this may be more of a trail maintenance issue and suggested that they could hold a trail maintenance invasive pull day.

Mrs. Elbert said it would be a good opportunity to educate the public especially if they could include information about why invasive species are “bad” and the importance of replacing them with the right species to encourage insects, birds and wildlife.

Mr. Orvis said that there is some knotweed around town but that Farmington does not have as much of it as other area towns. He said he sees patches of bittersweet occasionally but has not seen a situation where it is choking out the other native species.

Mrs. Titus suggested they contact UNH to see if there is a program on this topic there.

Chairman Bogardus said the UNH Cooperative Extension has these types of programs/speakers.

Mr. Sorensen asked about the Natural Resources Stewards course and if they have any outreach to people who may be interested in learning about plants and the world.

Mrs. Elbert said that up until about a year or two ago the program did not have much marketing but recently some people have gotten involved in that and it will be stepped up more this year.

Chairman Bogardus said the Extension could also speak about what other courses they offer.

Mrs. Elbert suggested that even if they didn’t have a separate forum they could have speakers attend their regular monthly meetings and speak on a particular topic such as the Master Gardener Program or any of their other programs just to get the word out to the public.

Mr. Orvis suggested the commission could put together its own program to promote the use of the trails, conservation lands and resources available in town. He said the program could include photos of local wildlife from the game cameras and information about what activities can and can’t be done on each property.

Chairman Bogardus said it would be a good way to teach people about our conservation lands and what the Conservation Commission does and why they do it.

b). Trail Planning – Chairman Bogardus said they received a publication in the mail from NH Fish and Game entitled “Planning Trails to Allow People to Enjoy Nature and Wildlife to Thrive”. She said she planned to read it and then put it in the Con Com library at some point and that the members could borrow it from her if they would like to do so.

c). Snowshoe Walk – Mr. Orvis said he planned to snowshoe the trails when the snow gets high enough to allow him to trim the vegetation overhead.

Mr. Sorensen then suggested they could hold a snowshoe walk on one of the properties such as

on the trail on the French property.

Chairman Bogardus said it would be great if they could find someone to talk about its features as they went along the trail.

Mr. Orvis said he could speak about identifying trees in the wintertime other items that stick up above the snow.

d). High School Class Assessment – Chairman Bogardus said she received an e-mail from the FHS Fresh Water Ecology class who is assessing the state of the culverts in town. She said they are focusing on culverts in the Mad River area but that she could not recall any culverts along that area.

Mr. Orvis said there are mostly bridges across the river in town but that there may be a culvert where the river crosses in New Durham.

Chairman Bogardus said she put the high school class in touch with Colin Lawson who is working with Trout Unlimited on assessing culverts/water throughways in town. She said she invited them to attend a Con Com meeting and that the Con Com would help them if possible. Mr. Orvis said there is a tributary to the Mad River that runs in from the pond at Yonder Ridge and where it crosses Ten Rod Road is a culvert. Some people think the tributary is the Mad River because the tributary is as big as the river itself he said.

He said if the students went up the Cocheco or Ela Rivers instead they would find culverts.

Mrs. Titus asked if the class needs to get in touch with the Town about any activities such as cleaning the culverts or if they were merely conducting a visual assessment and wouldn't be touching anything.

Chairman Bogardus said this is for a science fair project but she did not know what they planned to do.

Mr. Fitzgerald said there are a bridge and a culvert on Central Street.

Ms. Bogardus said she has already told the class rep about the culvert on Meetinghouse Hill Road and that she would tell them about the members' suggestions.

e). Smile – Chairman Bogardus said the commission needs to have its picture taken before Jan. 30 for inclusion in the Annual Town Report. She suggested they all come to next month's meeting all "prettified" and ready to be in the picture.

7). FYI:

Mr. Orvis said the commission received one Intent to Cut Notice and read it aloud as follows: Tax Map R21, Lots 5 & 15, owner - Dorothy Bean, total lot size-338 acres, acres to be cut – 40, forester – Charlie Marino.

8). Student Recognition:

Mrs. Titus said there is a third grade Valley View Community School student who the help of his father goes up to Valley View each week and takes their recyclable materials for pickup by the hauler at the school. She said she would like to invite the boy to attend a meeting and explain

what they are doing to recycle at home. We had talked about ways to get more people involved and this would be one way to spread the idea she said.

She asked if the boy and his parents could be invited to the next meeting.

Chairman Bogardus said that would be “awesome” and would include them on next month’s agenda if they are available.

Mrs. Titus said she would contact the boy’s parents to see if they can attend the meeting.

Mr. Orvis suggested the boy could be included in the Con Com photo next month.

Chairman Bogardus said they could make him an honorary Con Com member for the photo.

Mr. Fisher asked if the Selectmen could draw up a letter and sign it naming the boy as an honorary member of the commission.

Mrs. Titus said she would ask the board about it.

9). Upcoming Dates:

January Con Com monthly meeting – Wednesday, January 8, 2020 at 6 p.m.

10). Adjournment:

Motion: (Fisher, second Sorensen) to adjourn the meeting passed 8-0 at 7 p.m.

Respectively submitted

Kathleen Magoon

Recording Secretary

Laura Bogardus, Chairman