

Town of Farmington
Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, July 11, 2018

Commission Members Present:

Laura Bogardus, Chairman
Randy Orvis, Vice Chairman
Dave Connolly, Selectmen's Rep.
Tom Sorensen
Michelle Elbert
Richard Ballou
Bill Fisher

Commission Members Absent:

Patience Taylor, Secretary

Others Present:

Barry Keith, BH Keith Associates

1). Call to Order:

Chairman Bogardus called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

2). Pledge of Allegiance:

All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

3). Public Comment: None

4). Public Hearing:

The Farmington Conservation Commission hereby gives notice of a Public Hearing to be held on Wednesday, July 11, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. to discuss forest management work to be done within the Town Forest located on Bay Road in Farmington. The hearing will be held at the Town's Municipal Offices, 356 Main Street, Farmington, NH. Laura Bogardus, Chairman

Chairman Bogardus opened the Public Hearing at 6:05 p.m.

Property Manager Barry Keith gave the members a brief description of the next step in the Forest Stewardship Plan for the 136.5 acre Town Forest. He described how the land is bisected by the Cocheco River and that in 2015 there was a managed timber harvest and sale on the land east of the river. A similar harvest is proposed for approx. 40 acres on the western portion of the property he said.

Mr. Keith pointed out the existing entrance road and parking area off Bay Road on the map. He said he was proposing to create a new log landing and access area to the east of the current parking area and has applied for a driveway permit from the Town.

He said the land west of the river includes about 75 acres of forest land and the last piece of property acquired by the Commission (approx. 40 acres) which was heavily cut by the previous owner. Very little forest management activity will occur in that area except for cleaning up any blow downs as the area needs time to recover from the previous cutting he said.

He said the primary areas to be harvested on the western side of the property include stand 11

near the front of lot, stand 6 near the fire pit near the river and in the northern part of that side of the river. They will remove dead or dying trees and release the younger, better quality trees to improve the quality of the stand he said.

He said wildlife habitat issues include identifying den/snag trees (dead trees that provide shelter for birds/animals), cutting around trees to promote Aspen regeneration and mass release of acorn producers to promote a better species of tree and to benefit area wildlife.

Mr. Keith said that he expects this to be a winter project to allow time for receipt of the driveway permit and coordination with the logging contractor to determine the layout.

He said they also discussed requesting that the contractor cut a few trees next to the existing parking lot to prepare to improve and expand it according to the terms of the deed. The area has also been a problem regarding illegal dumping and the hope is that by making it a little larger and more open to Bay Road it may reduce the instances of those problems.

Mr. Orvis asked if they will do any cutting of the mature Hemlocks in that area.

Mr. Keith said they plan to cut that area very lightly and leave most of the Hemlocks intact to keep the big timber character to that area. He said they also designated a 50' no cut zone along the main wetland area of the property and the river itself.

Mr. Connolly asked about the size of the parking area when the project is completed.

Mr. Keith said the parking area will be about twice the size it is now. He noted there is some vegetation that comes up to the parking area now that could be removed by hand instead of paying for someone to remove them.

Mr. Connolly said about 3 years ago a volunteer took down some trees but didn't remove them.

Mr. Keith said some of their remains are still there. He said he would coach folks to take some of the trees and then have a chip operation to open up that area. He said there are a lot of stones and boulders throughout the property and they hope to bring in skidders to move the boulders to where they want to expand the parking and create a better site for the log landing.

Mr. Connolly asked if the current driveway would be maintained.

Mr. Keith said the signage is located at the current entrance and by maintaining it they would not have to deal with moving the signs.

Mr. Connolly said the Abbott's Grant sign needs some repairs and the Davenport sign has become tipped. He then asked about the gate to the property.

Mr. Keith recommended they leave the gate as is. He said the plan is not to use the current entrance road for logging purposes as the loggers would damage the road. He said it will be crossed in some locations but they will try to keep the road intact.

Mr. Keith said during the 2015 project, the Town supplied a culvert and some materials that his contractor installed and that there will be a similar culvert arrangement on this side of the property. He said he has not yet contacted the DPW for assistance with providing another culvert because he wanted to make sure the project was a "go" before putting in the request.

Mr. Orvis said that during a past walk of the road he saw some vernal pools and skid ruts.

Mr. Keith pointed out their locations on the map and said he was aware of it.

Mr. Sorensen asked if any of the Hemlock trees were taken down if they could be milled by someone in town and used to repair the sign at the entrance at minimal cost.

Mr. Orvis said there are several people in town who have their own portable mills.

Mr. Keith said that any production logging contractor would have to put those 3 or 4 logs in a tractor trailer to transport them from the Town Forest to their mill site which would not be cost effective and that he doubted it would happen. He added if someone has a trailer to transport the logs he may be able to convince the logging company to load the logs on the trailer.

Mr. Connolly noted that the timber harvest that is taken by the logger helps pay for the logging.

Mr. Orvis said he was hesitant to use Hemlock for signs instead of pressure treated wood because he was uncertain about its ability to stand up to the weather.

Mr. Keith recommended they use pressure treated lumber for the sign posts to save processing and transportation costs for using the Hemlock.

Mr. Connolly asked what the next step is in the management plan after the timber harvest.

Mr. Keith said they previously discussed trying to develop more comprehensive trails that would loop around the property and to create an educational area somewhere along the trail.

There were no members of the public present.

Chairman Bogardus closed the public hearing at 6:20 p.m.

Motion: (Ballou, second Fisher) to accept BH Keith Associates proposed project as presented passed 7-0.

Agreement Update- Ms. Bogardus said Mr. Keith provided an updated copy of the agreement between the Commission and himself for the members to review and approve. She said the terms of the agreement have remained the same and only the dates have been changed to extend the contract for 1 year.

Mr. Connolly explained that for the past few years the Commission has extended Mr. Keith's contract for land management services for the Town Forest for 1 year and that the fees for services rendered have remained the same. The management of the French and Dubois properties is under a separate contract he said.

Ms. Bogardus said the contract extension she received is for the French and Dubois properties.

Mr. Keith said it is supposed to be for the Bay Road property (Town Forest) and that he would send her the correct contract extension.

Mr. Connolly said the contract extension needs to be approved by the Commission members and then forwarded to the Board of Selectmen for their approval.

Motion: (Orvis, second Elbert) to approve the contract extension for Barry Keith Associates for 1 year;

Discussion: Mr. Fisher asked if the term of the contract extension could be longer than 1 year. Mr. Connolly said the Commission previously discussed lengthening the contract extension but were advised by the Town Administrator to only extend it for 1 year.

Mr. Fisher said Mr. Keith has done an outstanding job for the town and that it would make things easier for everyone involved to extend the contract for a multi-year term.

Vote: The motion passed 7-0.

5). Review of Minutes:

June 13, 2018- Page 5, line 11, second motion- amend to "Sorensen" made the motion to take a 5 minute break.

Motion: (Connolly, second Elbert) to accept the minutes as amended passed 7-0.

6). Old Business:

a). Hay Day- Chairman Bogardus said the members previously voted to spend \$75 for spaces at Hay Day and the spaces are \$30 each so she reserved 2 spaces. She said that Moose Mountain Regional Greenways (MMRG) will not attend the event this year but that the Seacoast Area Mobile Market (SAMM) van will also need space.

After some discussion, the members decided to display the NH Fish and Game Dept. fur kit, a recycling presentation with tips on how to reduce the use of plastic/Styrofoam materials, the Transfer Station's rules and regulations, maps/photos of the trails in town, maps of conservation properties and smaller versions of the new maps from MMRG.

Consensus of the commission was they need 2 spaces for the Con Com's display and a third spot should be reserved for the SAMM van.

Motion: (Orvis, second Connolly) to expend an additional \$15 for a third space at Hay Day passed 7-0.

Chairman Bogardus said she would ask if Taylor Rental would donate the tables again this year.

Mr. Fisher and Mrs. Elbert offered the use of their pop-up tents to use that day.

Mr. Fisher also volunteered to pick up the fur kit and tables for the event.

Mr. Sorensen suggested they get some luan wood and some felt to use as display boards so they will be reusable each year.

Motion: (Fisher, second Elbert) to expend up to \$100 to purchase materials for permanent display boards;

Discussion: Mr. Connolly suggested Mr. Fisher also check prices and available materials at Hobby Lobby.

Mrs. Elbert offered a coupon for the JoAnn's Fabrics store.

Vote: The motion passed 7-0.

Mr. Connolly said he will not be available for booth coverage this year.

Mr. Ballou said he could provide coverage during the morning hours.

Ms. Bogardus, Mr. Fisher and Mr. Sorensen will set up the booth spaces.

Mrs. Elbert and Mr. Fisher will be available intermittently during the day as they are also committed to booth coverage for the other organizations/committees they belong to.

Mr. Orvis said he could not make a commitment ahead of time due to some health issues.

Recess- Motion: (Bogardus, second Orvis) to take a 5 minute break passed unanimously at 6:53 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 7:02 p.m.

b). McCarthy Trail Scavenger Hunt- Mr. Fisher said the hunt is scheduled for Friday at 9:30 a.m. and how much of the trail is used depends on how many kids show up. He said if it is raining that day the list of items will be given to the kids to find them on their own time and then submit the results to the library.

Mr. Connolly suggested that Chief Drury be informed of the event and that there may be a few more cars in the Public Safety Building parking lot that morning.

c). Forum Topics- Mrs. Elbert said she spoke with Urban Forester A. J. Dupere at the NH Division of Forests and Lands who said he is available to give a talk on timber harvesting indoors or outdoors anytime except for the month of October. She said he asked if they were looking for him to speak on any particular aspect of timber harvesting such as disease, profits or hazards. Consensus of the members was the most important thing about timber harvesting is the health of the forest and that the talk should focus on educating the public about the methods used and reasons to conduct a harvest.

Mrs. Elbert said she would contact Mr. Dupere and request that he schedule a forum on a Saturday in September potentially at the Public Safety Building using the McCarthy Trail as part of the discussion.

Other forum topic suggestions included:

Beekeeping- Mr. Orvis suggested a forum on the importance of bees and getting started in beekeeping be held by December to allow time for people to order bees for the spring season.

Mrs. Elbert said she would contact Amy Antonucci who is former member of the Seacoast Beekeepers Association and now teaches her own courses on beekeeping to see if she is available to speak at a November or December forum and if there is a cost involved. She suggested she could also include information on native pollinators and plant species.

Ms. Bogardus said a pollinator and native species discussion would be a good spring topic.

Best land management practices- Mr. Orvis said someone from the NH DES may be willing to speak on this topic.

Ms. Bogardus said that would be a good topic for a winter forum.

Moose - Chairman Bogardus said she spoke with NH Fish and Game Wildlife Biologist and Moose Project Leader Kristine Rines who agreed to give a talk on Tues., August 21 and that a donation would be appreciated.

Mr. Connolly asked for the donation amount and if there are sufficient funds in the Commission budget to make the donation.

Ms. Bogardus said she was considering a \$50 donation and that she would review the budget to see if it would allow for a donation to Ms. Rines.

Mr. Sorensen said after a brief review of the budget it shows there is approx. \$1,000 remaining of their \$3,000 yearly operating budget.

Consensus of the members was to forgo the Aug. 21 date and try to find a January date acceptable to Ms. Rines.

d). Any Other Old Business- Mr. Connolly said the Selectmen approved Grant Myhre as the second member of the Cocheco River Local Management Advisory Committee and that they suggested asking if any of the Con Com members is interested in becoming the third member from town. The daytime meetings are held once a month in Concord and more information could be found by contacting riversprogram@des.nh.gov he said.

Mr. Fisher he is considering joining the committee but needs more information about when the meetings are held before committing to become a member.

Blue Job Signage- Mr. Connolly asked for an update on the signs for Blue Job Mountain trails. Ms. Bogardus said she has not heard anything more about the matter. She said she will follow up and get a status report.

Mrs. Elbert said she also had not heard back from an e-mail sent to NH State Parks Volunteer Program Manager Patrick Hummel about the trail signs. She added that she was able to find information on how to maintain a trail but not on how to start a trail maintenance group.

Hills Property- Mr. Connolly asked about the closing on for the Hills property conservation easement.

Ms. Bogardus said she has not received any update on the matter.

Meetinghouse Hill Road Property- Mr. Connolly asked for a status report on the conservation easement plans for this property.

Ms. Bogardus said she has not received any update on this project.

7). New Business:

a). New Spruce Trees- Chairman Bogardus said Mrs. Beverly McCarthy donated some spruce seedlings to the Con Com and they have been planted temporarily at her home until a permanent location can be found for them. She asked the members for suggestions on where to permanently plant the trees.

Mr. Orvis suggested using the trees to create a visual barrier from Route 11 to High Street. He said if the trees were planted in the High Street right-of-way and not in the Route 11 right-of-way they would only need permission from the Town.

Mr. Fisher said the trees would need to be protected with wire cages to keep animals from eating them and that he would donate some old wire fencing for the planting.

Mrs. Elbert suggested they let the seedlings winter over where they are now and wait until spring to plant them.

Ms. Bogardus agreed and said that would allow time for a more root development before replanting them again.

Mr. Sorensen suggested that in the mean time they should contact the Town Administrator and find out the process for planting them in a Town right-of-way or on Town property.

The members then thanked Mrs. McCarthy for her kind donation.

Ms. Bogardus showed the members a card received from the McCarthy family thanking the Con Com, Selectmen, Chief Drury and others who took part in the dedication of the trail in Gerry McCarthy's name, their kind remarks and all the work that was done in preparing the trail, the sign, the plaque and bench. Mr. Connolly will pass the card on to the Selectmen.

b). Any Other New Business- Chairman Bogardus announced that member Patience Taylor has submitted her resignation from the Commission. Her letter of resignation stated the resignation became effective on June 14, 2018.

Motion: (Connolly, second Sorensen) to regretfully accept the resignation of Patience Taylor passed 7-0.

Chairman Bogardus asked for any volunteers to become the new Commission Secretary. Discussion included the tasks of the Secretary which include handling of official documents, writing the meeting minutes in the absence of the Recording Secretary and to Chair any meeting where both the Chairman and Vice Chairman are absent.

Mr. Fisher volunteered to be the Commission Secretary.

Motion: (Connolly, second Ballou) to have Mr. William Fisher as the Secretary for the Conservation Commission passed 7-0.

BH Keith Invoice- Chairman Bogardus said Mr. Keith submitted an invoice for \$150 for the driveway permit application for the Town Forest.

Mr. Orvis said the invoice is for preparing the design plan for the new entrance and was a reasonable charge. He noted the invoice states Mr. Keith charged them for 2.5 hours of work at \$60 an hour.

Mr. Connolly asked if the fee included the cost of the driveway permit application fee.

Mr. Orvis said he did not think there is an application fee for driveway permits.

Motion: (Connolly, second Fisher) to pay the invoice as presented by BH Keith Associates passed 7-0.

PLAN NH Steering Committee- Mr. Fisher said that the committee conducted interviews with about 30 residents on their ideas on revitalizing the downtown area. He said the UNH Cooperative Extension rep. then collated the information and came back with a preliminary reply which will be compiled into a report when she returns from vacation.

Two of the main themes included that people like the library and see it as a civic center of town and that they would like to see more marked hiking trails. He said they like what was done with the McCarthy and the French property trails and that they would like marked trails at the Dubois property and the Town Forest.

Mr. Fisher said the Town Planner has applied for a grant to be used to develop a walking/bicycle trail to connect various points around the downtown area.

Mr. Connolly said that years ago they looked at a possible trail system on the Dubois property but the only public access area available is the existing access off River Road. He said it is tough to cross the river there and then once you get across the river much of the property is an

incline. The access used off of Dubois Lane is for land management purposes only and is not a public access he said.

Mr. Orvis said the only practical way to have a trail on the Dubois property is to have an entrance on the Smith property. He added that once across the river on the Smith property there is already something of trail there.

Mr. Connolly said the Smith's would have to agree with that as that is their private property.

Mr. Fisher said the committee is still in the beginning stages of their work and things are moving along. He said grants are being looked at to find ways to get more money to improve the downtown area and the pedestrian, non-motorized and motorized vehicular traffic flow.

The next meeting is July 25 at 5:30 p.m. he said.

New Off Road Vehicle Club- Mr. Orvis reported that the new off road recreational vehicle club is scheduled to hold its first meeting on Wednesday, July 25 at 5 p.m. at Honey Dew Donuts but the time and place may be subject to change. He said he will post any changes and anyone interested in becoming a member should sign up on the FARM Trails Face book page and then attend the meeting.

8). FYI:

Mrs. Elbert said the Natural Resources Stewards Program courses through the UNH Cooperative Extension will be held from Sept. 7 to Dec. 12 and applications can be submitted online at nhstewards.org

9). Upcoming Dates:

McCarthy Trail Scavenger Hunt- July 13, 2018

Next Commission Meeting- August 8, 2018

Hay Day- August 18, 2018

10). Adjournment:

Motion: (Ballou, second Sorensen) to adjourn the meeting passed unanimously at 7:52 p.m.

Respectively submitted

Kathleen Magoon

Recording Secretary

Laura Bogardus, Chairman