

Town of Farmington
Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, August 8, 2018

Commission Members Present: Chairman Laura Bogardus, Vice Chairman Randy Orvis, Secretary Bill Fisher, Selectmen's Rep. Dave Connolly, Michelle Elbert, Tom Sorensen (6:45 p.m.)

Others Present: Budget Committee Secretary Stephen Henry

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:

Mr. Henry said the Budget Committee would like to switch meeting days with the Conservation Commission. He said their current meeting date is the 4th Wednesday of the month so they are not receiving a full month's budget report for the Town and some of the information is about 4 weeks old by the time the committee reviews it.

Mr. Connolly asked if meeting on the 1st Wednesday of the month would help the Bud Com.

Mr. Henry said that would not be helpful on those months were the 1st Wednesday is the next day after the previous month ends as there would not be enough time for the Town to compile the reports and get them out to the members for review before their next meeting.

After a brief discussion the following motion was made:

Motion: (Orvis, second Connolly) to change the Con Com meeting night to the first Wednesday of the month at 6 p.m. passed unanimously.

4). Review of Minutes:

July 11, 2018 – No errors or omissions

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

5). Old Business:

A). Hay Day – Mr. Fisher said he finished constructing the display boards for their booth but the display materials have not yet been put on the boards. He said the NH Fish and Game Fur Kit is available for the display and he planned to pick it up in Durham next week.

Mr. Connolly asked if Chairman Bogardus had been contacted regarding the Henry Wilson School student the Commission sponsored for a week of camping at the Barry 4-H Conservation Camp in Berlin. He said that the Commission has sponsored campers for the last 4 years and that in exchange they ask that each camper to come to Hay Day to speak about their experience at the camp.

Chairman Bogardus said this year's camper was unable to attend this meeting due to a Boy Scout meeting but that he will be at Hay Day.

She that Tracy Shaver sent in a video of student activities at the camp for viewing that day.

Mr. Connolly said that each year the Commission contacts the school's Guidance Dept. and asks them to find applicants for the camp program. The applicants write an essay about why they want to attend camp and then present it to the Commission at a monthly meeting. The applicant receiving the sponsorship for that year is then announced at the meeting he said.

Mrs. Elbert said she researched recycling information for a display and found in addition to basic information there are also opportunities to delve deeper into various aspects of the topic such as China's new policy on accepting recycled materials from around the world. She said China has decided to take in fewer materials which impacts recycling systems in this country.

Mr. Connolly said changes in the recycling market has affected the Town's recycling program too and that he will see if the Transfer Station has updated handouts to give out at Hay Day.

Mrs. Elbert said she planned to come up with some potential bullet points for the display and will send them to the members for their review and comments.

Chairman Bogardus suggested one copy of the Transfer Station rules be laminated for display and that she is putting together a list of conservation properties for display at their booth. She said the Seacoast Area Mobile Market (SAMM) Van will attend the event and that she and Mr. Sorensen would arrive at 7:30 a.m. to assist with the set up of the booth.

B). McCarthy Trail – Mr. Connolly said the hole in the ground in the trail path has been filled in and a steel plate is covering the opening inside the old water tower thanks to the DPW.

He said the Selectmen approved the installation of the new windows and doors to block admittance to the tower. The netting installed to keep visitors out of the tower was "messed up" again he said.

C). Canoe Launch – Mr. Connolly said he was still working with property owner Chris Knight to install a canoe launch from his property to the Cocheco River. He said they are getting answers to some legal questions and at this point the project looks good. Because of the status of the land the canoe launch is allowed there without any special easement he said.

Mr. Orvis asked if the launch would be covered by the state's \$2 million liability insurance policy for trails. He said the canoe launch could be considered a trail head for a water trail and suggested they get the site registered with the state.

Mr. Connolly said it would be covered under Current Use and the state law that covers agreements between municipalities and private land owners that waives liability to the land owner providing no fee is charged for recreational use of the land.

Mr. Fisher said that Rochester has been looking to establish a kayak launch on the river near the downtown area and has had some difficulty with site selection because private property owners don't want to provide access to the launch site. He said they are considering putting the launch site somewhere in the vicinity of Spaulding High School and they may be able to

establish a water trail with the state with one end in Rochester and the other in Farmington.

D). Forums- Timber Harvest – Mrs. Elbert said the members discussed having Urban Forester A. J. Dupere of the NH Division of Forests and Lands conduct a forum on timber harvesting on a Saturday as the days start to get shorter in the fall. She said his only available Saturday is on Sept. 29 but he was unable to commit to that date at this time. She suggested setting up an evening forum and ask him to return for a day time follow-up at a future date.

Mr. Connolly suggested they hold off on this forum until spring/early summer next year as recent evening classroom style forums have not had much of a turnout.

Mrs. Elbert said she would try to get Mr. Dupere to schedule a daytime outside forum during the last 2 weeks in October and if he is not available to request a spring date.

Beekeeping – Mrs. Elbert said she contacted Amy Antonucci about holding a forum on beekeeping but has not had a response yet.

Wildlife – Mr. Orvis asked about the outcome of the previous discussion on having a wildlife forum. He said he was reminded following a Face book post where a resident called Police after seeing a possum “playing possum” on their property. He said the poster thought there was something wrong with the possum but their natural instinct is to play sick or dead and emit smells as a means to keep predators away. Possums are some of the most wonderful wildlife to have around because they clean up garbage and insects in the environment and we will see more of them as the climate continues to warm he said.

Chairman Bogardus said they planned to set up a wildlife forum in the spring.

Mr. Connolly said that NH Fish and Game is a good resource for wildlife information as they have an education dept. as part of their services.

E). Blue Job Signage- Mr. Connolly asked for an update on the Blue Job Mountain trail signs. Chairman Bogardus said NH State Parks Volunteer Program Manager Patrick Hummel was away from the office and that no new information has been received. She said she would try to contact him again.

F). Any Other Old Business- None

7). New Business:

A). BH Keith Invoice- Chairman Bogardus said she received an invoice from Mr. Keith for attending the public hearing last month and the administrative follow up for \$270.

Motion: (Connolly, second Fisher) to pay the BH Keith invoice for \$270 passed 5-0.

Mr. Connolly said the Selectmen approved the 1 year contract renewal for Mr. Keith. He said the Commission has used Mr. Keith for a number of years, there have been no issues working with him and that he has done right by the Town. The members agreed with Mr. Connolly.

B). SELT Update- Members received an update on the various conservation projects under way in conjunction with the Southeast Land Trust. She said Mr. Connolly had asked for a status on the Hills property and said that the fundraising, draft and submittal of the easement deed to the NRCS has been completed and once approved a closing will be held this fall. The rest of the

document contains a similar update to the other projects (some of which is confidential at this time) she said.

C). PLAN NH Steering Committee Report- Mr. Fisher said the committee has changed its name to the Farmington Revitalization Steering Committee.

He said the committee will have a booth at Hay Day and the display will include 3 proposals for developing the old fire station property. These proposals are not the only ones under consideration and it is meant as a way to get people started thinking about what they would like to see there. A questionnaire asking residents for their ideas for the downtown area will also be available at the booth and the information will be collated by the UNH Cooperative Extension. He said the Selectmen, the Revitalization Committee and the Con Com will have booths set up along with other groups/organizations and urged everyone to get out to Hay Day.

D). Whistle Stops- Mr. Connolly said the Selectmen plan to hold a “Whistle Stop with Selectmen” as way to reach out to the community in a non-formal setting. The first Whistle Stop will be held on Sept. 19 at 6 p.m. at Fernald Park with free hot dogs and soda. It will give residents a chance to stop by and meet the board and ask questions or just chat. He said they plan to hold future Whistle Stops in other areas in town and advised residents to watch for flyers advertising the gatherings.

E). Seacoast Harvest - Mr. Connolly said the Commission previously made a \$100 donation to the SAMM Van program and forwarded their copy of the Annual Report to the Chairman.

F). Town Forest – Mr. Connolly said the plans to conduct a timber harvest at the Town Forest are underway following the Public Hearing held last month. He said the driveway permit for the project has been granted by the Town, Barry Keith will perform the work and the Town will provide a culvert and materials for the log landing entrance there.

G). French and Dubois Property Walks- Mr. Connolly asked for the results of the monitoring walks on the properties conducted the previous Tuesday.

Chairman Bogardus said that the state monitor, Barry Keith, herself and Mr. Sorensen took part in the monitoring of the properties. She said the monitor said the properties looked good and gave some minimal suggestions such as better posting of the trail signs in one small part of the trail. She said she noticed there was not a lot of trash at either site.

Mr. Connolly said he was told that both properties received an “A+” from monitor Steve Walker who has been monitoring the properties for a number of years and that the printed report should arrive in about a month.

Chairman Bogardus said that Mr. Walker was very complimentary of Mr. Keith and expressed a high amount of respect for his work.

Mr. Connolly said that David Price of NH DES also spoke highly of the condition of the 2 properties.

Chairman Bogardus added that Steve Yurick is waiting for a break in the weather and will then mow the wildlife area on the French property.

H). Smith Property – Mr. Connolly asked about the condition of the Smith property.

Mr. Orvis said during the hot weather a lot of people use the trails and the remaining trash is not the biggest problem there. He said the bigger problems are the fires and that the deep pool is now about 2-3 feet shallower than it was 40 years ago. This is due to throwing the fire remains and large rocks into the pool he said.

Mr. Sorensen arrived at the meeting.

Mr. Connolly said that several years ago he spoke with the Smith's about conducting surveillance of the area but they weren't willing to do anything at that time.

Mr. Sorensen said that SELT has provided a camera and that the Farmington Police Dept. will also donate a camera so there will be 2 cameras on the property. He said that some citizens are stepping up to help out as many of them are tired of what has been going on there.

Mr. Sorensen said during the monitoring walk it was suggested that the brush on the parking lot sides of the conservation properties be cleared out to improve the view from road and to discourage the use of the parking lots as a "hiding spot" for improper activities.

Chairman Bogardus said it was also suggested that they better delineate the parking lot at the River Road entrance to the French property to deter visitors from driving down to the river.

Chairman Bogardus said a local contractor offered to donate a camera to the Con Com.

Mr. Sorensen said that the camera is capable of sending a picture to a cell phone and also has a GPS tracker in it so if it is stolen it can be tracked and recovered.

Chairman Bogardus said she would contact the contractor and discuss his offer.

Mr. Sorensen said that during the property monitoring walks they also talked about setting up a trails maintenance group to get some networking started and find out if there are any opportunities for training people to maintain trails.

I). Any Other New Business- None

8). FYI: None

9). Upcoming Dates:

Moose Mountains Water Wildlife Festival – August 11-12, 2018

Hay Day – August 18, 2018

Next Con Com Meeting – Wednesday, Sept. 5, 2018

10). Adjournment:

Motion: (Elbert, second Sorensen) to adjourn the meeting passed unanimously at 6:55 p.m.

Respectively submitted

Kathleen Magoon, Recording Secretary

Laura Bogardus, Chairman