

Town of Farmington
Conservation Commission Meeting
Wednesday, July 13, 2016

Commission Members Present:

Dave Connolly, Chairman
Randy Orvis, Vice Chairman
Bill Fisher
Resta Detwiler
Rose Muise
Richard Ballou
Charlie King, Selectmen's Rep.
Laura Bogardus (left at 6:20 p.m.)

Others Present:

Patti Connaughton-Burns, Executive Director, Moose Mountain Regional Greenways

1). Call to Order:

Chairman Connolly 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:

June 8, 2016-

Motion: (Detwiler, second King) to accept the minutes as written passed 7-0-1 (Ballou abstained).

5). MMRG/Patti Connaughton-Burns:

Ms. Connaughton-Burns told the members she took the position as the new Executive Director in February and has enjoyed meeting a group of people who are interested in preserving properties in the region which includes Wolfeboro, Wakefield, Middleton, Milton, Farmington, New Durham and Brookfield. There are four water sheds in the region, some of which are interstate waterways. She said she was asked to take leadership of a conservation action plan with several grant availabilities pieced together from eight different funding organizations. A conservation specialist will be hired in August to help with the plan. They have vetted the eight organizations, found six they could not use and have two they plan to work with.

She said the MMRG is expanding beyond conservation to include recreation with both soft and hard uses of the land such as ATVs, hunters, fishermen and horseback riding. We want to include everyone's voice in this to be inclusive and to possibly provide an economic kickback to the towns through tourism she said.

One of the first things the group did was to look at the conservation mapping from Geographically Referenced Analysis and Information Transfer system (GRANIT) which is a project created to maintain and provide a geographic data base to citizens and organizations. They started with the town of Milton where 12 conservation properties were not listed and noticed Rod Thompson's property also was not included. She explained that once a conservation easement is created some very specific paperwork must go to GRANIT before they can map it so there is quite a bit of backlog there at this point and the GRANIT project is underfunded. Discussion included "official" properties which are properties with a conservation easement on the deed which is recorded with the town and the county and unofficial lands which are those that could in a decision by the town or the landowner become non-conservation lands. These lands are often used for other uses besides conservation she said.

Ms. Connaughton-Burns said the group plans to use this information to see if the conservation lands can be linked up and to help them understand the priorities of the residents of the region and to prioritize requests for conservation easements. The easements have costs including a stewardship endowment to show that the lands are being properly managed "forever" to keep their Land Trust Approvals (LTA) and remain eligible for grants. There is also a legal fund for potential challenges by a developer or towns interested in taking a property by eminent domain. Discussion also included the "dotted" areas on the map show areas of environmental importance, purchase of land next to dots for conservation will be eligible for grants, the property color codes on the map, protected water supply and well areas and which Farmington conservation properties were not designated on the map. Members determined the Whittum, Maynard, Leclair, Thayer, and New Dam properties, a green common area in Labrador Circle development and five parcels in the Town Forest need to be added to the map. Chairman Connolly will provide the tax map and lot numbers for the missing properties when he returns from vacation.

Members then discussed working with ATV riders to promote responsible trail use, parallel or crisscross trails for multiple uses so the uses do not compete with each other, letting the users make trails, what users look for in a trail and what uses are compatible.

Mr. Orvis then asked Ms. Connaughton-Burns if she could recommend someone to speak at a forum about responsible ATV use which would be hosted by the Conservation Commission. She said the request is consistent with the MMRG's purpose and will see if someone is available to speak on the issue.

Chairman Connolly then officially invited a representative from MMRG to be a guest at the commission's booth during Hay Day. Ms. Connaughton-Burns said a board member and/or volunteers may be available for the Aug. 20 celebration.

Mixer- Ms. Connaughton-Burns said the MMRG received feedback following the last mixer which suggested the Planning Boards and Boards of Selectmen from member towns should be included in future mixers to get them more engaged in the conservation process. Chairman Connolly said he attended the last mixer and noted that the guest speakers were good but there was no interaction between members. He suggested the group return to interaction between all of the members as a group, forming "breakout groups" and including maps for review and

discussion as has been done at previous mixers.

Ms. Connaughton-Burns then told the members that two new properties in Wakefield along both sides of the Branch River now include conservation easements and that two properties in New Durham and Brookfield with great historical and ecological value are in the final stages of obtaining easements.

Chairman Connolly then thanked her for attending the meeting and providing information to the commission.

6). Old Business:

A). Town Forest- Mr. Connolly reported the trees scheduled to be taken down have not yet been removed so the additional work to the parking area on the Abbott's Grant has not been completed. He said he expects the work to be completed in about one month.

Cameras- Mr. Connolly said surveillance of the property has been compromised following the theft of the cameras mounted in the area. The Police Dept. has been notified. He said the thieves would have needed a ladder and a bolt cutter to retrieve both the surveillance camera and the camera aimed at the surveillance camera. He said there haven't been many problems in that area over the past year and asked the members if they wished to replace the cameras.

Mr. King asked what could be done to prevent the theft of the new cameras.

Mr. Connolly said they would need to put the replacements in a different location from where the stolen cameras were mounted. He added he felt the cameras should be replaced as the Town/Commission has the right to try to protect the property.

Mr. Orvis noted the trash has been mainly thrown on the side of the road there. If the cameras were put where people can't see them, the people won't be seen by the cameras he said.

Discussion included possible legal recourse if the thieves are identified, the cameras are programmed to imprint the camera name on the photos, "pressing their luck" by not replacing the cameras and whether to wait or replace the cameras immediately. Consensus of the commission was to wait a little while before replacing the cameras.

B). Dubois Property- Fish and Game intern Naomi Houle conducted a monitoring walk on Monday with Chairman Connolly, Mr. Fisher, Mr. Orvis and Barry Keith in attendance. The monitoring report included a description of the property, condition of the boundaries and noted the stewardship plans need to be renewed in 2022. In the narrative Ms. Houle noted that cement pillars were dumped at the site, the surveillance cameras were in place, the field should be fertilized to promote plant growth and that an abutter erected a gate to prevent ATV access. Mr. Connolly said the commission has tabled the decision about fertilizing the field for two months and after seeing the field he suggested the members approve putting down lime this year and to fertilize it next year. Discussion included reducing/eliminating woody plants from the area by using fertilizer to promote herbaceous plant growth, a new estimate for the cost of spreading lime or fertilizer is needed, if the work could be done by members, the size of the field and how much material would be needed and the amount of lime needed would be based on the acidity level of the soil. Consensus of the members was to obtain an estimate of the cost for materials and application.

C). French property- Members hiked the 1.6 mile trail with Barry Keith and Ms. Houle and noted the work has been completed. The monitoring report narrative stated this is the first official marked trail in town and recommended the difficulty level be marked as “easy”. Photos of the seven newly installed bridges will be placed in the file.

Members viewed a deer stand with no landowner identification which was installed without landowner approval. Chairman Connolly said the Town is concerned about safety and conflicts with trail users and the stand was tagged asking that information to be provided to the Town. The report also referenced the Cameron’s land swap along river, placement of cameras and recommended the trail be tagged for multiple uses.

Mr. Orvis added that one thing not included in the report was a comment by Ms. Houle that this is the most diverse property of all properties she monitored this year with more types of habitat, wildlife and geological features all on one property.

Trail Reveal- Chairman Connolly said the commission has been working on the French property trail for about six or seven years. He said a big reason he wanted to improve the trail was because he heard a lot from the public looking for a place to hike with their kids. He said that at first he was resistant to changing the trail route as recommended by Barry Keith but he is now glad it was done that way and is proud of the wonderful results. He then told the members he would like to hold a “Trail Reveal” and invite the public and local dignitaries to meet at the parking area to hear a brief history of the property and participate in a guided hike. He provided proposed invitations, a list of invitees, suggestions on how to advertise the event and an example of a printed posting to be placed around town.

Mr. Orvis suggested a 9-1-1 number be assigned to the parking lot so the property would have a street address in the event of an emergency at the site. Mr. King said the Planning and Assessing Depts. take care of assigning street numbers. He added that a sign will be needed with the address printed on it and suggested that if the trail has an official name it should be included on the sign.

Mr. Connolly suggested it should be named the French Trail after the property owner who put the parcel in conservation. He also suggested the trail be promoted through maps/brochures put in places around town to show where to go hiking locally.

Consensus of the members was to hold the Trail Reveal on Sunday, Sept. 18 at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Fisher suggested the event be advertised at Hay Day and that a hand painted stenciled sign be placed at the trail head.

Recess- Motion: (Connolly, second King) to take a five minute break passed unanimously at 7:30 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 7:40 p.m.

D). Ronci Property- Chairman Connolly presented a draft RFP to design/build a handicapped fishing access for review. Mr. Orvis said he viewed the proposed site for the access with Barry Keith but almost had his “bubble burst” when Mr. Keith said the plan may not be a practical project due to flooding and advised the members to look at other options. Mr. Orvis said that section of the river is a unique opportunity for fly fishing and told the members he felt any flooding problems could be engineered around.

Discussion included constructing the access out of stone, flooding won't move the river, set the piers like telephone poles, Fish and Game has spent a lot of money for something not as good as this and the pier could also provide a place for nature walks for children.

Consensus was to post the RFP as presented. Chairman Connolly will also send copies to local companies that may be interested in bidding on the project.

E). Hay Day- Chairman Connolly reported he has arranged for tables and chairs for the booth from Taylor Rental, members offered the use of their pop-up tents and he has requested the skull and fur kit and the animal tracks kit from Fish and Game but has not heard back from them yet. He said he could not find anything about fish in their repertoire to match the booth contest theme "Just Keep Swimming".

Mr. Fisher will set up the recycling wagon in front of the booth which will be located between TD Bank and the funeral home.

The NH Assoc. of Conservation Commissions can't send a representative but will send printed material. The 4-H, U NH Co-operative Extension and the Center for Wildlife in York, ME also plan to attend. Ms. Detwiler will contact Moose Mountain Reservation and invite them to attend the event. Mr. Orvis suggested the Loon Preservation Society and the fish hatchery also be asked to attend.

F). Other Old Business: None.

7). New Business: None

8).FYI: None.

9. August Dates:

A). August 10- Next Conservation Commission monthly meeting.

B). August 20- Hay Day.

10), Adjournment:

Motion: (Orvis, second Ballou) to adjourn the meeting passed unanimously at 7:50 p.m.

Respectively submitted

Kathleen Magoon

Recording Secretary