

Town of Farmington
Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, May 10, 2017

Commission Members Present:

Dave Connolly, Chairman
Randy Orvis, Vice Chairman
Laura Bogardus, Secretary
Charlie King, Selectmen's Rep.
Richard Ballou
Patience Taylor
Bill Fisher
John Law

Others Present:

Jillian Hall, Seacoast Eat Local
Executive Director
Residents Lisa Capone, Robert
Bellevue, Ginny Gray
David Viale, SELT Conservation
Project Manager

1). Call to Order:

Chairman Connolly called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

2). Pledge of Allegiance:

All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

3). Non-Public Session:

Motion: (Connolly, second King) to enter non-public session under RSA 91-A: 3 II (c) Reputation passed 8-0 by a roll call vote (Connolly, Orvis, Bogardus, King, Ballou, Taylor, Fisher, Law- yes) at 6:05 p.m.

Motion: (King, second Orvis) to come out of non-public session passed 8-0 at 6:50 p.m.

Motion: (King, second Bogardus) to fund 50% of the appraisal up to \$3,000 with the condition that if the landowner does not go through with it the funds will be reimbursed to the Town passed 8-0.

Recess- Chairman Connolly called for a 5 minute recess at 6:50 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 7 p.m.

Motion: (King, second Fisher) to seal the minutes of the non-public session until the issue is made public passed 8-0.

4). Seacoast Eat Local:

Jillian Hall told the commission that Seacoast Eat Local is a non-profit organization with offices in Dover which serves Rockingham, Strafford and York Counties. Their mission is to support and promote the consumption of locally produced food. There 4 primary programs offered by the organization and the printed information available includes the Annual Local Foods Directory which is a free listing of approx. 200 farms in the seacoast area including 5 farms in Farmington. Ms. Hall said the group also runs the Winter Farmers' Market which is a series of 12 scheduled events from November through April at the Wentworth Greenhouses and Exeter High School with an average daily attendance of 1,500 people and about 50 vendors. The organization also

runs a SNAP/EBT acceptance program at the winter and summer farmers' markets which increases the purchasing power of the benefit recipients and increases the revenue for local farmers.

Ms. Hall said their newest program is the Seacoast Area Mobile Market or "SAM Van". Last summer was the 9 week pilot season for the program which included a stop in Farmington in front of the Community Action Program (CAP) offices in the Old Courthouse on Main Street. The farmers' market on wheels buys food grown as local to the individual stops as possible to sell at targeted locations with limited access to fresh local food. She said that this year the stop sites are changing and the van will not return to the stop in Farmington as it was not a successful partnership there. They are currently shopping for a new location which may be a combined stop with Milton and Farmington as the Milton location was also not as successful a partnership as they would like it to be she said.

Chairman Connolly asked about why the Farmington location did not work.

Ms. Hall said the van was parked right outside the CAP offices and they found that operating in a town is not quite the same as at a housing authority site because there is not the same "captive audience" there. She said one strong marker for a successful partnership is having a strong partner who knows the community and is able to get the word out about the program and the CAP office was not able to do that successfully. She said the stop was also coordinated with CAP's food pantry day and they found that people are less likely to want to shop at the van when they can get food for free at the CAP pantry. She said communication is a key piece of a successful program and once it gets out that benefit recipients receive a 50% discount on fresh fruits and vegetables the program becomes more successful she said.

Ms. Hall said another factor for success is the population density of the area and it would be better not to split Milton and Farmington into 2 separate locations. She said their strongest lead for a new location is at the Auction House in the Milton Mills. She said they would still consider a stop in Farmington but it must include a safe, reserved space for the van and a strong partnership with an entity that is able to supply the support and communication with the community.

Mr. King asked if they have spoken to the Town Administrator to try to get some help with the program and finding a better stop location in Farmington.

Ms. Hall said that CAP was the primary contact in Farmington and that they have focused mainly on 2 possible locations in Milton but is still open to having a stop in Farmington.

Ms. Taylor asked if they have considered approaching the Goodwin Library about a possible stop location. She said Library Director Tami LaRock would be happy to work with the group.

Ms. Hall said they have not yet contacted the library but would like to.

Ms. Bogardus asked if only SNAP recipients can purchase produce from the SAM Van or if it is open to the general public.

Ms. Hall said they have concentrated on what could be considered more SNAP heavy locations but anyone is welcome to shop at van. Only those people using the SNAP benefits program will be eligible for the 50% discount on their purchases she said.

Mr. King asked how someone can receive a copy of the weekly newsletter published by the organization.

Ms. Hall said they publish 8,000 copies of the flyers annually and there is also a searchable website available (seacoasteatlocal.org). She said they plan to improve the print distribution system which currently consists of an entity asking for box to put at their location to receive the publications. Some current locations to pickup flyers include Butternut Farm in Farmington and McKenzie's' Farm in Milton she said.

Members suggested the publications be made available at the Goodwin Library, the Municipal Office Building and the Public Safety Building.

Mr. Orvis asked if the program also includes freezer foods such large cuts of meat.

Ms. Hall said that while their primary focus is fresh produce, they do carry cuts of meat but have learned that large meat purchases are more of novelty purchase so they base their stock of items available on individual portions of traditional "meat and potatoes" staple items and on what their customers tell them they want.

Ms. Hall said she wants residents of Farmington to know that they are here and to avail themselves of the organization's services. She said there are more than 5 farms in Farmington and she hoped they would take advantage of the free resource available to them by listing their farm in the publications.

She said she was also looking for support of the cost to print their publications so they are reaching out to Conservation Commissions and other municipal groups to make a donation to Seacoast Harvest. The annual publication supplies consumers with information and resources for local food. She asked the members to consider donating \$100 to help offset printing costs for the publication.

Mr. Connolly asked if the Commission would receive recognition for their donation.

Ms. Hall said there are different donation categories and showed the members how the donors would be listed in the annual publication based on the level of donation given.

Mr. Connolly asked if any of the other Conservation Commissions have donated to the organization.

Ms. Hall said the only other Conservation Commissions that have donated so far are at the county level and that this is the first year that they have reached out to the local Conservation Commissions.

Mr. Connolly asked if the stops in Farmington were weekly, bi-weekly or monthly.

Ms. Hall said the stops were made weekly for 9 weeks last year and this year the weekly stops will increase to 13 weeks. Next year they hope to reach their capacity of 15-17 weeks of weekly stops in the area. She said in order for a stop to be successful it must be consistent by stopping on the same day and the same time each week. The trick is to find a location that remains visible and active from summer through fall even after students go back to school she said.

Mr. Law asked if they link to other websites or Face Book pages so people would know where they are located and what is available each week.

Ms. Hall said Seacoast Eat Local has a Face Book and an Instagram page. Each stop has a

contact person who receives the weekly newsletter with recipes and product information. The liaison is then asked to spread the word to their local groups and contacts she said.

Mr. Fisher said that a group of residents holds a monthly roundtable at the library and asked if Ms. Hall would be interested in attending a meeting and speaking with residents about the program.

Ms. Hall said she would be happy to attend and will contact the Library Director.

Motion: (King, second Bogardus) to donate \$100 to Seacoast Eat Local passed 8-0.

Mr. King suggested that in addition to contacting the library, Ms. Hall should contact the Town Administrator about placing printed information in the Municipal Offices.

Mr. King then asked if the program operates in Maine.

Ms. Hall said the program serves York County but the SAM Van currently does not stop there due to a different beneficiary program with less participants and less funding for the incentives program. She said the program does use food provided by about 70 York County suppliers.

Ms. Hall said she hopes to get the SAM Van to the Hay Day celebration this year which will take place on August 19. She thanked the members for the donation and their time and then left the meeting.

5). Review of April Minutes: Tabled until the next meeting.

6). Old Business:

A). Clean Up Review- Mr. Connolly said that despite the rather “misty” weather, 11 volunteers turned out for the annual trash pick-up in town. He said 720 pounds of trash were removed from Cocheco and River Roads and thanked the Farmington Police Dept., the DPW, food/beverage donors and the volunteers for their assistance with the event.

B). Town Forest Conditions- Resident Robert Bellevue came forward to discuss some concerns about the Town Forest with the Commission. He said the sign is placed in an out of the way place, the parking lot is too small for modern vehicles, some areas are littered with trash, water is streaming across the path, logs in the pathway and evidence of fires/camping at the site.

Mr. Connolly said the Town Forest is monitored by the Selectmen and the Conservation Commission and they are working to address some issues there. He said they have obtained an E911 designation and an address for the location and that Mr. Fisher has volunteered to make/install the address sign.

He said the small parking lot was donated to the Town with the stipulation that it hold 3-4 cars. Timber harvesting will be conducted on one side of the property and the logs in the path will be addressed.

Mr. Connolly said that fires and camping are illegal at the site and that the Police Dept. has been informed that this is taking place there. He said that one of his biggest concerns is that a squatter’s/camper’s fire will get away from them. He asked anyone seeing fires or camping taking place at forest to report it to the Police.

He said the contract to continue maintenance of the forest will be addressed by the members later in the meeting. There are also plans to install an educational shelter on the lot containing

information about the history of the site and conservation practices he said.

Mr. Connolly said that aggressive security measures have been taken against littering, dumping and damage to Town property. The perpetrators have been prosecuted when caught and this has reduced the number of incidents he said.

Mr. Bellevue noted he saw cans hanging from some of the tree branches.

Mr. Orvis said he sometimes does this and picks up the cans on the way out.

Lisa Capone asked if there was a trail camera installed at the site.

Mr. Connolly said that a camera was installed there but it was stolen from the site.

Mr. Bellevue asked if the colored ribbons on some of trees were put there by the Town.

Mr. Connolly said there are 6 lots that make up the Town Forest and the ribbons are the boundary line markers for each of the properties.

Ms. Capone said the trails in Wolfeboro have trash bags and/or cans and doggie bags at the beginning of the trails and again at the half way point. She asked if the commission had considered doing the same thing here.

Mr. Connolly said he will discuss it with the land manager but noted there would be someone needed to empty the bags/cans and resupply the bags.

Mr. Bellevue said he goes hiking on trails in other towns and the trails are more clearly marked and there are boards over wet areas on the trails.

Mr. Connolly suggested he walk the French property trail which is clearly marked and does have small bridges over the wet trail areas there. He added that the next project is the conservation area on Bay Road.

He thanked them for coming to the meeting and discussing their concerns with the members.

Recess- Motion: (Connolly, second Bogardus) to take a 5 minute recess passed unanimously at 7:55 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 8 p.m.

C). Dubois/French Contract with BH Keith- Mr. Connolly reminded the commission that the land management contract with BH Keith Associates expired in December 2016. He suggested the members renew the contract for 1 year of scheduled maintenance when needed.

Motion: (Orvis, second Ballou) to renew the contract with BH Keith Associates for 1 year for the Dubois and French properties passed unanimously.

D). Town Forest Contract- Mr. Connolly told the members that the management contract for the Town Forest expires June 1. He said BH Keith is in the process of developing a management plan for the parcels which includes timber harvesting on the Abbott's Grant side, an educational center on the 46 acre parcel and to bring in fill to increase the size of the parking lot. Other management tasks include 12 trees marked for removal conducted by Northeast Arbor Tech he said.

Motion: (Orvis, second Bogardus) to renew the contract with BH Keith Associates for the Town Forest for 1 year passed unanimously.

Mr. Law asked why the management of the conservation properties is covered by separate contracts.

Mr. Connolly explained that some of the easements are held by different entities with different

stipulations such as the Town Forest property which consists of 6 parcels with individual easement requirements.

Mr. Law suggested the commission contract with Mr. Keith on an on call basis for all of the properties as needed.

Mr. Connolly said the commission could consider it once the management plan is done.

E). Moose Mountain Regional Greenways Annual Dinner- Ms. Bogardus and Mr. Law attended the dinner and reported back to the commission on the activities during the event.

Mr. Law said topics included the MMRG's recent decision to become a land trust to increase their ability to monitor lands.

Ms. Bogardus said they also spoke about permaculture farming and presented Conservationist of the Year and Uber-Volunteer of the Year awards.

Mr. Connolly joked that the most important question is "How was the food?"

Ms. Bogardus said the event was held at the Governor's Inn and the food is very good there.

7). New Business:

A). Strafford County Conservation District (SCCD) - Mr. Connolly reported that he attended the SCCD board meeting. The board discussed outreach to local Conservation Commissions to make them aware of the workshops and other services available to the public. Mr. Connolly said one of the duties of the Commission is provide education to the public about conservation issues and suggested the Commission sponsor a seminar/workshop in conjunction with the SCCD in Farmington. Discussion included suggested topics and potential locations for the seminar. Mr. Connolly said he will contact the SCCD to "get the ball rolling" for a seminar.

B). Hay Day- Mr. Connolly said the annual Hay Day celebration will be held on August 19 and asked the members if they wished to have a booth at this year's event. He said this year's theme is "The Tiger's Den" and booth spaces are \$25 each. He said the Commission has rented 3 spaces in the past which would cost a total of \$75.

Motion: (Connolly, second Ballou) to expend \$75 for rental of booth space at Hay Day passed unanimously.

Members then discussed what displays/guests should or should not be included in the booth.

Members agreed the recycling trailer would not be asked to return. Suggestions for returning/new displays and participants included the Fish and Game Fur Kit and Moose mount, other animal mounts, pictures from local game cameras, MMRG, SELT, SCCD, 4-H and the York Wildlife Center.

Mr. Connolly said the commission will revisit the matter at the next meeting.

C). Plumber's Ridge Trail Tour- Mr. Fisher said the Grand opening of the Plumber's Ridge Hiking Trails will take place on Saturday, May 13 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. beginning at the NH Farm Museum in Milton.

D). Fall Clean Up- Mr. Connolly said he has received requests for a fall clean-up similar to the annual spring clean-up. Discussion included possible fall dates for the clean-up, trying a different day or time, form 2 groups with staggered start times and to include the conservation properties in the clean-up.

Consensus of the members was to schedule a fall clean-up for Sunday, Sept. 17 from 1 to 4 p.m. The rain date will be Sunday, Oct. 1.

E). Granite State Rural Water Association- Mr. Orvis said Selectmen have approved allowing the Association to study Farmington's water sources and to develop a protection plan for existing and potential new water sources. He said a committee will be formed to oversee the Water Source Specialist's work and a representative from each board is needed for the committee. Consensus of the members was to accept Mr. Fisher as their representative to the committee.

F). Canoe Launch- Mr. Orvis said the canoe launch at the landfill is in need of maintenance and asked if the commission should oversee the maintenance or allow the canoeists to "be on their own". He explained that in the 1990's there was no Shoreline Protection Act and the Conservation Commission conducted some bank improvements in the area of the bridge and the dump on Cocheco Road. The trees are now growing up around the logs that were put in place there and the site is in need of maintenance he said.

Mr. Orvis also suggested that a path to the launch site be added for easier access to the river. Mr. Fisher suggested talking to the Code Enforcement Officer and to the Planning Board for guidance as to what is allowed at the site.

Mr. Connolly asked Mr. Orvis to look into the state regulations and find out if a permit is needed to perform any work there. He added if no permit is needed it may be something for the Commission to take on as a project.

8). FYI: None.

9). Upcoming Dates: None

10). Next Meeting: Wednesday, June 14 at 6 p.m.

11). Any Other Business: None.

12). Adjournment:

Motion: (Orvis, second Bogardus) to adjourn the meeting passed unanimously at 8:55 p.m.

Respectively submitted
Kathleen Magoon
Recording Secretary

David Connolly, Chairman

