

Town of Farmington
Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, November 8, 2017

Commission Members Present:

Dave Connolly, Chairman
Randy Orvis, Vice Chairman
Laura Bogardus, Secretary
Bill Fisher
Richard Ballou
Patience Taylor

Commission Members Absent:

Charlie King, Selectmen's Rep.-excused
Tom Sorensen-excused

Others Present:

Dan DeSantis, Town Planner
Allison O'Donnell, FHS Art Dept.
Drew Parker

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). Public Comment:

Mr. Orvis reminded the public that it's hunting season and to wear orange while walking outdoors.

4). FHS Art Dept. /McCarthy Trail Water Tower/Allison O'Donnell:

Mr. Connolly introduced Ms. O'Donnell and said he contacted her regarding the old water tower on the McCarthy Trail located behind the Public Safety Building. He said the round, two-story brick structure has interior concrete walls, antique machinery that was used to operate the well and is so old that it is unknown when the tower was put into or taken out of service. He said the commission plans to add the tower as an attraction along the trail and that some vandals have painted graffiti all over the interior of the building. He said the vandalism may have been a good thing in that it gave him the idea to cover the walls with a mural and to ask if the high school art dept. might be interested in getting involved in the project. He suggested the history of Farmington as a topic for the mural and asked members for their topic ideas. Mr. Orvis said he liked Mr. Connolly's idea but questioned how much history would fit in the space.

Mr. Ballou said that in his home town there is a mural in the town library depicting some of the town's history from the early days of the Revolution to more recent events in a chronological order, left to right on the wall. He estimated the mural is about 10' high and about 35' long.

Mr. Connolly estimated the tower is probably about 20 to 24 feet in circumference.

Ms. O'Donnell said her dept. would like to be involved and asked about the expected timeframe to complete the project.

Mr. Connolly suggested that the project be conducted next spring which should give students enough time to come up with a plan for the mural. He added that he would be happy to hand the project over to Ms. O'Donnell.

Ms. O'Donnell asked the members for important historical places/events that they would like to see included on the mural.

Mr. Connolly asked if the students could get extra credit from their history teacher if they did the research for the mural.

Members suggested possible subjects could include the Municipal Office Building (the former high school), the Goodwin Library, the old Courthouse, churches, old manufacturing facilities and the 1940 forest fire that started in Farmington and burnt all the way to Portland, Maine.

Mr. Connolly suggested that Ms. O'Donnell obtain a copy of the Farmington Historical Society's book that contains many pictures of the town's history.

Ms. Taylor said that she would drop off a copy of the book to Ms. O'Donnell within the next few days.

Ms. O'Donnell said she planned to take measurements of the tower and asked if it was locked.

Mr. Connolly said the structure is not locked and that she could visit the site at anytime. He said about 12 feet from the entrance sign there is an old logging road leading right to the tower.

Mr. Fisher advised her to be careful of the open manhole inside of the tower which is scheduled to be covered soon. He said the windows all the way around the tower will provide light for the project.

Ms. O'Donnell then asked about supplies for the project.

Mr. Connolly suggested she come back to the commission in Jan. or Feb. with a plan for the project and a materials list and the commission will obtain the necessary materials. He said it would be a good time to begin painting when outdoor temperatures reach about 55 degrees, usually in April, with the goal of having the mural completed in late April-early May.

Ms. O'Donnell said she planned to discuss the project with her students and thanked the members for thinking of the art dept. and the students.

5). Master Plan Review/Dan DeSantis:

Mr. DeSantis told the members he is very impressed with the fact that Farmington is one of few towns that has a Town Forest and with the great job being done by the commission members. He said the 2005 Master Plan is due for an update and suggested that as many stakeholders as possible be involved with the revision.

He said the current chapter titles in the plan are in functional areas such as land use and the economy and proposed that the next plan have "issue areas" using issues that confront the community. The revised plan will have fewer recommendations but the recommendations will be more in depth he said.

Mr. Connolly said during last month's discussion the members commented that much of the plan could be condensed and abbreviated.

Mr. DeSantis said he found some of the plan confusing and difficult to implement. He said he plans to integrate the issues into a capital plan so the Board of Selectmen and the community will know what has to be done and how to measure it.

He said the conservation component is going to be very important because Farmington is one of the fastest growing towns in the county. We really have sprawl and it takes 20 minutes for a fire truck to reach a fire on Ten Rod Road and need to condense and define ourselves he said. He then asked if the members had any issues they wished to discuss.

Mr. Connolly suggested they begin by reviewing the 2005 Master Plan discussion at last month's meeting.

Page 2-9, Land Use- consensus of the commission was that the first paragraph needs to be adjusted as it talks about the response to a survey and contains no information about how the survey was written, who the respondents were, how was it taken(one-time, in person, by mail) and how in depth it was.

Mr. DeSantis said he had no information about how the survey was done because it occurred before he became employed by the Town. He said this issue makes his point about having as many people as possible involved in the plan.

Mr. Orvis asked if he intended to do a mailer survey again.

Mr. DeSantis said no mailer is planned and the process would be on a one-to-one in person basis through interactive meetings to determine where the town wants to be in five years.

Mr. Connolly said that when it comes to public forums and Town Meeting the turnout is poor. He said that a mailer to property owners may not be a bad idea as there are property owners that don't live in town so they would not attend Town Meeting or other public meetings.

Mr. Orvis said there are also a number of voting residents that don't own property in town.

Mr. Connolly said the paragraph states that the majority of the respondents favor using local funds to acquire land and keep it as permanent open space and noted the commission seems to agree with the statement.

Mr. DeSantis said the problem with the sentence is that it is a statement and that he is trying to avoid using statements. If this becomes an issue, we need to delve into why it is an issue and what are the resources needed to do this he said.

Page 3-13, Natural Resources- Mr. Connolly noted that the second paragraph has a lot of technical information. The Master Plan is not only a tool for Town board members but can also be used by new business owners, investors and laypeople to learn what the vision is of the townspeople. The average layperson may not understand the technicalities in the text he said. Mr. DeSantis suggested adding appendixes or addendums to the back of the plan for the technical data.

Mr. Orvis said he noticed that a lot of the text in the Natural Resources chapter is typical of the generic natural resources for this part of the state and so every Master Plan has the same kind of information. He said that there are also historical resources that have existed for so long that

people tend to think of them as natural resources such as stone walls, old mill sites along the river and the Town Pound. This chapter is completely lacking in things specific to the Town of Farmington that make the town unique he said.

Mr. DeSantis said his draft for the new plan will include defined priority issues, data that substantiates and validates the issues, objectives and recommended solutions, an action plan that outlines needed improvements, regulations, investments, estimated costs and a financing plan.

Mr. Fisher said the statement that says historically the town has had a poor record of wetlands protection and illegal dredging for peat for top soil points a bad light on the town and should not be included in the Master Plan. Someone thinking of bringing a new business to town could get the impression that residents don't care what happens in town good or bad he said.

Mr. DeSantis said the statement had to do with the issues surrounding the gravel pits.

Mr. Fisher said there are a lot of gravel pits, some still in use and some that are abandoned.

Mr. Connolly suggested the sentence should read "Farmington continues to protect our wetlands".

Mr. DeSantis then promised the plan will be a positive, pro-active plan that says here's what we want to do and here's how we will get it done. The rest of the material can be put into the appendixes he said.

Mr. Fisher said there have been a lot of positive changes in town since the 1980's. It's a much better town and is a great place to raise a family he said.

Mr. DeSantis said that when he completes the RFQ (Request for Quotes) for a consultant he will share it with the Town boards.

He said the Planning Board is going through a challenge with the downtown area and has been discussing Form Based Codes, the definition of storefronts and prohibiting first floor residences downtown. He asked the commission for help when the Master Plan discussion turns to sprawl, land use and the attractions to Farmington such as the hiking trails and the Town Forest.

Mr. Connolly noted that Farmington is lucky to have 2 forests- the Town Forest and the State Forest in town.

Ms. Bogardus asked if the consultant will be an overall consultant for the Master Plan and if the current plan will be used as a guide for the new plan.

Mr. DeSantis said the current plan will be thrown out. The new plan will have the vision, the steps to create and implement the vision, the cost, available resources and the plan of action. He said he planned to apply for grants but there is no plan to base them on and that is where the new Master Plan will come in.

Mr. Orvis said he brought up the issue of transfer of development rights at the last meeting. He said that could be one way to help the town reach some of its goals but it will be an uphill battle to try to educate people on how it works and to convince them we can do that.

Mr. DeSantis said he understood the transfer of development rights was similar to the use of

carbon credits.

Mr. Connolly said that in the current Master Plan there is separate conservation section but it is item number 11 (conservation lands) in the Natural Resources chapter. He that in the 3 or 4 chapters he happened to pull out for review, conservation is mentioned in each chapter.

Mr. DeSantis said that must mean that conservation is important.

Mr. Connolly said that several years ago the commission worked with an agency to identify areas in town that are important to the Con Com which are marked on the map in the Selectmen's Chambers. He said although the town changes some each year the core priority areas have not changed and noted that the maps and the Con Com files in the Town Office are other available resources for the Master Plan.

Mr. Orvis said the commission has done what it can to protect the Mad River corridor, the Cocheco River out near the Town Forest with conservation easements on public/private lands and in the southwest part of town from Ten Rod Road out with the goal of keeping the conservation areas as un-fragmented as possible.

Mr. DeSantis said conservation and land use have to be integrated. We have to find a way to concentrate development on the west part of town so it is not so sprawled out he said.

Ms. Bogardus said that issue should be part of the discussion and the plan.

Mr. DeSantis said a Planning Board member advised him to "keep the farm in Farmington".

Mr. Orvis then noted that historically Farmington is a mill town.

Ms. Bogardus asked how the discussions and meetings for the Master Plan will be advertised.

Mr. DeSantis said the advertising plan has not yet been determined as he is still working on developing the RFQ. He added that he has some experience with getting folks together and making it fun.

Mr. Connolly said the commission wants to be involved in the discussion. He pointed out that 9 parcels are listed on the chart included in the existing plan which equals approx. 1,200 acres in conservation. He said there are now approx. 2,500 acres in conservation that are either related to the water supply or are state, town or privately owned.

Mr. Orvis said that something more important than the Town Forest is that there are Fish and Game easements in Town which may be just as rare as Town Forests.

Mr. DeSantis said this is the kind of thing that should be celebrated about Farmington outside of town. We need to get the word out somehow he said.

Ms. Bogardus suggested we need to get the word out to residents too as many of them are not aware of these resources in town.

Mr. DeSantis suggested there should be a trail map available to residents.

Mr. Connolly said there is a trail map of the French trail posted at the town office, town website and at the kiosk at the French property.

He recalled that when he first participated in Hay Day 5 years ago that 50% of the people he spoke with that day were not aware that the town had a Con Com or any free public hiking

trails. He said the commission has done about as much as 7 people can do with public outreach by participating at Hay Day, hosting public forums and outreach to the schools.

Mr. Connolly asked if the Master Plan needed to go before the voters at Town Meeting.

Mr. DeSantis said there will be a warrant article for voter approval at Town Meeting because money will need to be spent to hire a consultant to develop the plan. He said the plan will have a 2 year timeframe for completion.

Mr. Connolly thanked Mr. DeSantis for attending the meeting.

6). Old Business:

A). NHACC- At the previous meeting, Mr. Connolly presented the invoice for the membership dues in the NH Association of Con Com's and had questioned when the dues were payable. He said he contacted them and found the dues are payable in April of the following year as has been done previously. The members voted to continue to be a member of the NHACC at the previous meeting and the dues payment will be paid out of the 2018 budget he said.

B). MMRG Mixer- No one attended the Moose Mountains Regional Greenways Mixer.

C). NHACC Annual Meeting- Ms. Bogardus said she and Mr. Sorensen attended lectures from the Land Trust Alliance about effective outreach and communication regarding conservation issues, the Fundamentals of Con Com, an OHRV discussion presented by the NH Fish and Game and a discussion about outreach to residents for the Natural Resources Inventory (NRI).

Mr. Orvis recalled that Moose Mountains did a NRI for the town about 15 years ago. He said there should also be an NHRI- Natural Historic Resources Inventory to conserve and promote areas such as the Town Pound and the old mill sites along the river.

Mr. Connolly thanked Ms. Bogardus and Mr. Sorensen for attending the meeting and noted that it is good for the members to attend these events to provide some background on issues the commission is presently involved in or may become involved with in the future.

D). EAB Update- Ms. Bogardus said she contacted Forester Andy Fast about conducting an Ash tree inventory in town as the first step to developing a plan to deal with the Emerald Ash Borer but has not yet heard back from Mr. Fast. She said winter is a good time to inventory the trees as it is easier to see the "blonding" of the trees and any suckers coming out of dying trees.

Mr. Connolly suggested that Selectmen may not be aware of the EAB problem or that the state has included the town in the quarantined area and they may ask how long it would take to complete an Ash tree inventory.

Ms. Bogardus said she did not know how long it would take and suggested Mr. Fast may be willing to attend a Selectmen's meeting to discuss the matter.

Mr. Connolly asked Ms. Bogardus to see if Mr. Fast would be willing to make a presentation to Selectmen and encouraged Con Com members to attend that meeting. He asked to be informed of Mr. Fast's availability and he then would ask the Town Administrator to include him on the Selectmen's meeting agenda.

He said the DPW should also be informed on the matter.

Ms. Bogardus said she reviewed a chart about the known EAB areas and noted Farmington currently has some infested and threatened areas. She said she will meet with Ms. Taylor and make plans to provide information on the issue to the public.

E). McCarthy Trail Update- Mr. Fisher reported that most of the signs are up and that the bench is 99% complete. He said there will be a lot of leaves covering tree roots and warned people to be careful where they step. The trail is fairly easy but there are trip hazards he said. Mr. Connolly said there have been questions about the trail posted on social media and said the trail can be accessed through the Public Safety Building parking lot. He said the placement and dedication of bench will be held off until the spring which will give the Home Depot employee more time to complete the character cutouts to be placed along the trail. He echoed Mr. Fisher cautions to walk carefully and Mr. Orvis' suggestion that the hikers should remember to wear orange when walking outdoors.

F). Any Other Old Business- None.

7). Review of Minutes:

October 11, 2017- No errors or omissions

Motion: (Bogardus, second Fisher) to approve the minutes as written passed 5-0-1 (Ballou abstained).

8). New Business:

A). Barry 4-H Camp- Mr. Connolly said he received a note from Larry Barker, Administrator of the Barry 4-H Camp informing him that the camper sponsored by the commission this year wrote thank you notes and also thanked the Con Com for supporting the camp again this year. Mr. Connolly said he contacted the staff at the Henry Wilson School and they have a poster out advertising the sponsorship for a student camper for 2018.

Ms. Bogardus asked if any staff members also talk to the students about camp program.

Mr. Connolly said when the sponsorship began they decided to ask the Guidance Dept. to recommend the program to students who may want to attend this type of camp program but would not have an opportunity to do so. He added that the program is advertised school-wide. Mr. Orvis said that some of the essays submitted (required for consideration for a sponsorship) were so well done that one would almost not believe they came from 13 year old students.

Mr. Connolly said the goal is have the essays for the 2018 sponsorship presented to the members at the January Con Com meeting. He said registration is opened in Jan.-Feb. and the openings fill up quickly.

B). 2018 Con Com Meeting Agenda- Mr. Connolly said Con Com meetings are the second Wednesday of each month with the exception of March due to Town Meeting. He included a tentative date of Sunday, April 29 for the Spring Clean Up with a rain date of Sunday, May 9. He also listed Hay Day, Saturday, August 18 and will discuss the commission's participation in the event next year. Tentative dates for the Fall Clean Up are Sunday, Sept. 21 with a rain date of

Sunday, Sept. 28 he said.

Mr. Fisher asked if the Rec. Dept. Family Fun Day and the Pumpkin Festival held at Fernald Park should be included on the calendar. He said including the dates would serve as a reminder and give the members more time to plan their participation in the events.

Ms. Bogardus suggested the events would be good community outreach opportunities.

Motion: (Orvis, second Bogardus) to post the 2018 meeting dates as presented passed unanimously.

C). Any Other New Business- Mr. Connolly said he would like to discuss the Town Pound.

Mr. Ballou asked for the location of the Pound.

Mr. Orvis said it is located off of Ten Rod Road and noted that Farmington's Town Pound is unique because it is eight feet high all the way around.

Mr. Connolly said the site is listed on the National Historic Registry and has a brass plaque commemorating its inclusion to the list. He said he went before Selectmen to request that a conservation easement deed be placed on the property and they approved his request. The draft deed is being prepared by the Assessing Dept. and will be sent to the Con Com and Selectmen for signatures and then filed with the Registry of Deeds insuring forever protection of the site he said.

Mr. Connolly said the current Town Pound was constructed in 1823 replacing an earlier pound constructed in 1802. The town received the property in 1975 and in 1993, then Con Com Chairman Randy Orvis, reported the designation of the Town Pound as a National Historic Registry site in the Town Report. The commission members at that time attempted to reconstruct the pound but their efforts didn't last long due to vandalism of the site he said.

Mr. Connolly said that once the conservation deed is filed he would like to look into restoring the site to its original appearance in 1823.

Mr. Connolly said that the preparation of 3 other conservation deeds is underway with the Con Com being added to the deeds. The properties are the Osgood property on Pound Road, a small parcel of river front property on the Mad River on River Road and the Waldron's Grant portion of the Town Forest. He thanked Assessing Clerk Kelly Heon for her help in updating the deeds.

Student Con Com Member- Mr. Orvis asked if the public schools have been contacted for potential student members and if the commission members have considered seeking student members from home schooled students.

Mr. Connolly said he has contacted the high school regarding the student member openings.

Mr. Ballou asked how they would contact home schooled students.

Mr. Fisher said parents of home schooled students have to check in with the school district and suggested the schools could relay the information to those parents.

Ms. Taylor said a many parents of home schooled students use the Goodwin Library so it may be a good place to outreach to those parents and students.

Mr. Orvis suggested that becoming a student member of the Con Com may count as

educational credit for home schooled students.

Mr. Connolly said there are actually 2 student openings on the commission and suggested that a public school and a home schooled student could become student members of the Con Com.

Ms. Taylor said she would put up a poster at the library advertising the openings and asked what age group would be eligible for membership on the Con Com.

Mr. Connolly said the student member must be a Farmington resident, be aware they would a non-voting member and be old enough to stay out until the meeting ends (generally 8-9 p.m.).

9). FYI: None

10). December Meeting Date: Wednesday, December 13, 2017

11). Any Other Business: None

12). Adjournment:

Motion: (Orvis, second Taylor) to adjourn the meeting passed unanimously at 7:35 p.m.

Respectively submitted

Kathleen Magoon

Recording Secretary

Dave Connolly, Chairman