

**Town of Boscawen
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Boscawen Municipal Complex
FINAL MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, August 15th, 2023 @ 6:30 p.m.**

Members Present: Alan Hardy – Chair, Jeff Abbe – Vice Chair, Norman LaPierre, Aurel Mihai, Henry Carrier – Alternate, Matthew Burdick – Ex-Officio

Members Excused: Mark Kaplan, Lyman Cousens – Alternate & Betsey McNaughten – Alternate

Staff Present: Charlie Niebling –Town Forester & Kara Gallagher – Planning & Community Development Assistant

Chair Hardy opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Chair Hardy made Mr. Carrier a voting member for the meeting.

PCD Assistant Gallagher completed roll call.

Consent Agenda:

Mr. Mihai motioned to approve the consent agenda. Seconded by Mr. LaPierre. All in favor. None opposed.

Old Business:

NHDES Proposed Changes to NH Wetland Rule: Chair Hardy said they need to find a different way to comment on the changes. If they see something troubling, they need to comment when they have the ability. The latest changes were intended to limit the functional ability of conservation. He said Conservation is the only Commission inside the town with the ability to hold money. Chair Hardy asked the Commissioners to think about how the group can be more effective. Town Forester Niebling said 5 Rivers just adopted a strategic plan. The cornerstone of which is more engagement with communities and local Conservation Commissions. Utilizing the local land trusts would be one way for the Commission to be more effective without infringing on any property rights. Vice Chair Abbe asked if the Commissions were being asked to step back. Chair Hardy said no, the last set of changes were in the Wetland Rules. Individual Conservation Commissions were not targeted, but Conservation as a whole, through the Wetland Rules, which are statewide. Mr. Carrier suggested being cautious if the Commissioners wish to respond.

Turtle Crossing Sign Update: Vice Chair Abbe did some research. He was able to find different kinds of temporary signs. These can be taken down and stored in the off seasons. The signs were fairly cheap, around \$12-\$15 each. These signs were more for residential use in neighborhoods. Discussion ensued.

Barnard Lot Draft Timber Sale Agreement Discussion: Town Forester Niebling presented a draft Timber Sale agreement with Mr. Adam Mock. Mr. Mock has provided proposed pricing, which was incorporated in the draft agreement. Town Forester Niebling explained the details of the contract and said they are ready to proceed. Chair Hardy suggested discussing the draft with the Commissioner's so there would be a chance for comments or questions. None heard. Town Forester Niebling said the agreement was very competitive, and they were benefiting from very good timing in the marketplace. If the work is done in October, and the site is flat and dry, the Commission will get a good catch, although they won't be sure until next summer. Vice Chair Abbe asked if the agreement with the landowner was still working well. Town Forester Niebling said yes, they've been very cooperative. Town Forester Niebling said with the Commission's consent, they will proceed. All concurred.

Mr. Carrier motioned to approve the draft Timber Sale agreement with Mr. Adam Mock, and for Town Forester Charlie Niebling to proceed with the agreement. Seconded by Mr. LaPierre. All in favor. None opposed.

Barnard Lot Draft Easement: Town Forester Niebling said there is no defined Right of Way that he could find after performing a deed search. The owner believed there was a document, and Town Forester Niebling will ask them to look for it. Town Forester Niebling suggested waiting until there are defined terms found, and then having a new deed recorded with these terms. This topic will stay on the agenda for next month.

Town Forest Update: Town Niebling suggested hiring a capable person with a brush saw to selectively thin some of the competing hardwood so that the pine can get a jump on the hardwood. He thinks it would be a worthy investment. Chair Hardy asked if the Commission could take a project area. Town Forester Niebling said yes and recommended an area of 15-20 acres. He will put a proposal together. Vice Chair Abbe said the picnic table was replaced at the Weir Farmstead. The old one was refurbished and can be placed somewhere else. He thinks it has 5-8 years of life left. Chair Hardy is hoping in the future to place a picnic table at Walker Pond. Vice Chair Abbe and Mr. Mihai walked a proposed trail in the Village Town Forest. The snowmobile trail that goes through the new Ross Express land will be gone once they develop the land. It could be made into a hiking trail. The new trail is supposed to bypass the existing trail. Mr. Mihai is hoping to have it all on town land. The beginning couple of hundred yards is close to town land but not quite within it. To get the trail within town land it would need to be leveled. Town Forester Niebling suggested to stay off the abutting land. The Commission could speak with Steve Brown of Ross Express. Vice Chair Abbe suggested working on updating the kiosks this winter, getting rid of old information, and adding impertinent information. He reported that some kiosks need work.

Walker Pond Update: Mr. Mihai suggested putting a kiosk at Walker Pond. Vice Chair Abbe suggested hiring a consultant to help with the vision for the future of Walker Pond. Mr. Mihai said the pond is getting so much use that the road and boat launch are getting washed out. The rain has affected the road too. Vice Chair Abbe said to revisit the topic in the spring and potentially bring in new material. Vice Chair Abbe said Mr. Bruce Johnson wants to go in to clean the backside of the dam where some brush has built up from the beavers. No concerns. Mr. LaPierre asked what should be done with the old pumphouse. Chair Hardy suggested asking Public Works Director

Dean Hollins to come to the next meeting to discuss options. PCD Assistant Gallagher will contact PW Director Hollins.

New Business:

None discussed.

Other Business:

Open Space Discussion: Town Forester Niebling said if the 31-Lot Subdivision for Cluster Development at 477 High Street gets approved through the Planning Board, there will be many more landowners willing to sell to developers that will want to apply for Cluster Subdivisions with the open space requirement. Were it not for families and Current Use, there would be a lot more development within Boscawen already. Chair Hardy said the only way to prevent future development of these big pieces of land would be to be the next owner. That option was essentially proposed with the 31-Lot Subdivision in the form of an easement. Mr. Mihai said he wasn't sure if setting the precedent of taking over all the small strips of land in town was the way to go. These lots won't always contain wildlife corridors. He was more concerned with land that was mostly undeveloped, versus areas that have already been built up. Chair Hardy said developers are asking where in Boscawen can they build. Mr. Mihai asked if the Commissioners could be more proactive in finding landowners with valuable land for conservation. Discussion ensued.

Membership: Chair Hardy would like the Commissioners to think about making the Conservation Commission a 7-member board. Currently, the Commission is a 5-member board. This topic will be deferred to next month's agenda.

A current member asked if Chair Hardy would ask the Commissioners if they'd like to see the member resign or step down to an alternate position, due to not being able to attend the meetings regularly. Chair Hardy said he believed every member has value and would rather not see anyone resign if possible. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Mihai suggested revamping the website to entice membership. Another idea was placing flyers along the trails and at the trailheads.

Adjournment:

Mr. LaPierre motioned to adjourn. Seconded by Mr. Carrier. All in favor. None opposed.

Next Meeting: Tuesday September 19th, 2023, @ 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Kara Gallagher.