

CONCORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

March 14, 2018, 7:00 p.m.

Second Floor Conference Room, City Hall, 41 Green Street

Members present at the meeting included: Jim Owers (Vice Chair), Councilor Mark Coen, Kathy Healy, Tracey Boisvert, Rick Chormann, and Jeff Lewis. Assistant City Planner Beth Fenstermacher was also present.

1. Minutes

February 14, 2018

A motion was made by Mr. Chormann, and seconded by Mr. Lewis, to approve the February 14, 2018, minutes, with edits that do not affect the context or outcome of the meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Heidi Holman, NH Fish & Game, presenting an update on conservation actions, species status, and land protection into the future

Ms. Holman stated that she has been working on the Karner Blue program for the Non-Game & Endangered Species Program for 14 years. She gave a presentation on rare wildlife species that are found within the City of Concord, giving feedback on the Conservation Open Space Plan Update, and provided action items. She provided data about the success of the Karner Blue program; numbers are still growing indicating that there is a positive response to habitat management and augmentation. She focused on 3 priority areas within the City that F&G considers to be prime hot spots for rare wildlife. The Concord Heights and Soucook River valley is the number 1 priority for habitat preservation and restoration due to the number of species that are supported by the plant communities and habitat found in this area, a list of the species was included in the presentation. The second priority area is the Beech Hill and Horse Hill area, listing the bird and reptile species supported in this area. The Pine Barrens support shrub land birds, and snake hibernacula, which includes stone walls, and other large rocky structures such as flood control structures. She indicated that biologists will be doing field studies in this area soon. The third priority is the Merrimack River, and listed the species found in this area. She indicated that there will be a survey for Fowler's Toads this year. Ms. Holman stated that the Garvins Falls and Broken Ground areas are of interest based on the similar conditions to the Heights, but they are understudied.

Ms. Holman suggested action items for supporting rare wildlife in the City, including burning, varying mowing times, citizen scientist tracking and reporting, and considering permanent protection for the airport. Ms. Holman stated that there is a 50 year management agreement for the airport parcels, and suggested it would be better from the habitat protection standpoint to have permanent protection instead of revisiting the agreement when it expires in 2050.

Ms. Holman will provide a GIS map of focus areas in the City that were identified as high priority for rare wildlife habitat management. She closed by stating that the City of Concord has great diversity of species and there are many opportunities to maintain or improve the conditions for these rare species.

3. Rob Morrill, Morrill Farm Dairy, to discuss current lease terms for the West Locke Road property.

Mr. Morrill made a presentation to the Commission to follow up on their letter requesting that the amount of the rent be reduced. He indicated that the industry has changed since the bid was submitted in 2012,

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and that there are certain practices they have put on hold due to financial reasons. He summarized improvements to the land that they have completed since 2012, including road maintenance, invasive species removal along the field edges, and overall improvement to the soil through their practices. Ms. Fenstermacher confirmed that they signed a 10 year lease, and there are four, 5-year renewal options.

The Commission agreed that the City Solicitor should provide a legal opinion before making any decisions. Ms. Fenstermacher will follow up with the Solicitor's office to provide an opinion for the April meeting.

4. NHDES Items – *Nothing to report*

5. Reports

a. Trails Sub-Committee

Mr. Owers attended the meeting and gave a summary of the presentation given by Marco Philippon of the Water Department regarding restriction of recreation on watershed property. Ms. Fenstermacher reported that the subcommittee will be presenting proposed trail selection criteria and new trail procedures to the Conservation Commission at the April meeting.

b. Upper Merrimack River Local Advisory Committee

Mr. Chormann stated that the Bug Nights have started, and occur at the same time as this meeting.

c. Contoocook and North Branch Rivers Local Advisory Committee - Nothing to report.

d. Forestry - A copy of the monthly forestry report was distributed for review.

e. Street Trees

Ms. Fenstermacher announced that Arbor Day will be celebrated on April 27 at 10 a.m. at Rollins Park. Modern Woodmen are donating two trees which will be the first plantings to kick off the re-planting of Rollins Park.

Ms. Fenstermacher presented the City Arborists request to utilize the tree planting budget to replace declining ash trees in the Commercial Street area. The Commission was in favor, and requested to see the tree location and species chosen.

6. City Open Space

a. Tanner Lot

Mr. Owers reported that the Tanners are open to selling for the appraised value. There was discussion about funding, and members felt that this would not be a good candidate for ARM funding, and instead the Conservation Trust Fund could be used. There was discussion about the existing driveway, potential trail parking, and the condition of the house foundation. The Commission members will schedule a site walk in early April before holding a hearing to vote on the purchase.

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b. Chesley Lot

Ms. Fenstermacher reported that the title search was completed and the Solicitors office is reviewing. A site visit will be set up to view the property before moving forward with the property transfer.

7. City Council/Planning Board – No items to discuss

8. Follow-up/On-going Items:

a. Easement enforcement policy discussion

This item was tabled to a future month to allow for Ms. Fenstermacher to talk to the Deputy City Solicitor.

b. Priority list for Acquisition – ARM Grant

This item was tabled pending discussions under non-public session.

c. Finance Update

Ms. Fenstermacher provided a summary report of the budget.

d. Conservation Easement Standard Templates: Agriculture/Forestry, Riparian/Wildlife, and SPNHF revised

This item was tabled.

9. Other Business

a. Riparian plantings

Ms. Fenstermacher reported that the Merrimack River Watershed Council approached the City requesting to plant riparian plantings at 2 locations in the City utilizing grant funds. One of the properties is under Conservation Easement on the Soucook River. Commission members are interested in pursuing this, but would like more information about the location of the plantings and the proposed species. Ms. Fenstermacher will follow up.

10. Non-public session for the discussion of the acquisition of conservation property in accordance with RSA 91-A:3, II(d)

Mr. Owers made a motion, second by Mr. Lewis, to enter into a non-public session, per RSA 91-A:3,II(d). By a roll call vote, the motion passed by a unanimous vote at 9:07 p.m.

Mr. Lewis made a motion, second by Mr. Chormann, to come out of non-public session at 10:03 p.m. With a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Lewis made a motion, second by Mr. Owers, to seal the minutes of the non-public session, per RSA 91-A:5, IV. With a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

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There being no further business, Mr. Lewis made a motion, second by Mr. Owers to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously at 10:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Fenstermacher
Assistant City Planner, Secretary Pro-tem