

CONCORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

MINUTES

January 9, 2019, 7:00 PM

Second Floor Conference Room, City Hall, 41 Green Street

Members present at the meeting included: Kristine Tardiff (Chair), Jim Owers (Vice-Chair), Tracey Boisvert, Kathy Healy, Jeff Lewis, Chris Kane, and Alternate Jan McClure. Assistant City Planner Beth Fenstermacher and Administrative Specialist Lisa Fellows-Weaver were also present. Rick Chormann arrived later in the meeting.

1. Minutes

December 12, 2018

A motion was made by Mr. Kane, seconded by Mr. Owers, to approve the December 12, 2018 minutes, as amended, with edits that do not alter the content of the meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Don Ross, Rossview Farm, to discuss proposed City acquisition of District 5 Rd property

Don Ross, property owner of Rossview Farms, met with the Commission to discuss the City's intent of acquiring a property at the end of District 5 Road, identified as the Country Hill Estates property. Mr. Ross stated that he wanted to reach out to the Commission and offer to provide the history of the area and discuss the benefits and options this property has to offer as an agricultural property. He stated that he would also like to improve communications between himself and the City.

Mr. Ross spoke to the existing easement on his property. He explained the past obstacles that have occurred with impacts from various recreational users. He stated that he is trying to enforce what was agreed upon in the easement as some uses have impacted the trail more than others; however, it is nice to see the trail revitalized and able to recover from prior impacts. He noted that there are a lot of people that utilize the trails and the feedback he has received has been very positive.

Mr. Ross spoke to the land on District 5 Rd., the Country Hill Estates parcel. Concord is a growing community, and is a quality place to live. The City will continue to grow and these areas for agriculture will be lost. He commented that the District 5 area is a gem and added that he feels the Commission should have some consideration with this area, the land is not under threat of development, and they should consider how to preserve the former agricultural fields. He stated that this land is a great resource to the Concord community and it would be sad to see this agriculture land lost. He noted that there are three watersheds on his property, so he has an interest in protecting water quality. He requested that the Commission look into other options that would be more beneficial to the land and the farming community. He stated that he feels there are more values to the land than what the Commission would use it for and if the City owns it then the human traffic will increase dramatically and there will be more impacts than what is necessary. He added that the trails and other uses contradict what the Conservation Commission is for. He stated that he hopes that the Commission will not be in a rush to develop trails and review other options and opportunities to recreate a community land and with agriculture uses.

Mr. Owers stated that there are currently no plans to build trails in the area. Discussion ensued relative to the grant and the funding from the State of NH. Ms. McClure noted that the grant is only half of what the purchase is and as a result of the grant, there will be restrictions placed on the property. Ms. Tardiff also explained that the City currently owns land that is currently leased for active agriculture, and that could be considered for this property as well.

Lynn Woodard, abutter at 113 District 5 Rd. stated that his residence was built in 1767 and is unique. It is surrounded by agriculture land with an easement (Rossview Farm). He stated that he has posted no parking signs along his property line on District 5 Road. He expressed concern with adding a parking lot at the trailhead on the Country Hill Estates property. He stated that he feels that any parking lot in the area

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would diminish the property values. Any attempt to disturb or alter the land would inhibit his option to sell as well as limit the audience of buyers.

Rob Talmage asked if anyone on the Commission would be willing to admit to a proposal of a potential parking area at the end of District 5 Road on the Country Hill Estates property. Ms. Boisvert explained that this was a comment made by Department of Natural and Cultural Resources staff as an option for placing the parking that Rossview Farm is required to provide under the easement, and the comment was made without an understanding of who the property owner was. This was not a recommendation made by the Conservation Commission or any representative from the City. Members of the Commission agreed that a parking area is not being contemplated at this time.

Ms. Tardiff stated that the next step will be for the Commission to hold a public hearing at which time members of the public will be able to comment.

3. Ron Klemarczyk, to discuss Forest Management Plan and future timber harvests

Ron Klemarczyk met with the Commission to discuss goals the Commission has for updating the Forest Management Plan and future timber harvests. He explained the process of creating and developing the Forest Management Plan, and history working with the City and the former Forestry Committee. He explained the process involved with a timber sale and harvest. He stated that he previously was told to try to do at least one timber sale per year. He continued to explain that his duties have changed as the trail work has increased due to an increase in the miles of trails, more impacts from weather causing more blowdowns that need to be addressed. He stated that the increase in trails is also decreasing the acreage of harvestable land, which has been lost to keeping buffer zones around the trails. In addition, earlier thaw makes access through wetlands more difficult, reducing accessible stands.

Mr. Klemarczyk provided upcoming work that he is proposing under his current budget, including the Batchelder Mill bridge which needs to be replaced, the Murray Loop trail at Oak Hill needs to be rerouted as there are steep sections and now there are streams running through areas during storms; signage is needed at the backwoods properties next to Winant Park, and there is a proposal from the Trails Committee to address parking at the trailhead at Currier Rd. He noted that there is an existing contract for Broken Ground to be harvested once the weather allows, and there may be some additional salvage operations if General Services identifies more infested stands. He stated that he typically comes up with a few sites for timber harvesting each year and recommended Batchelder Woods, which will need to be coordinated with the School District, and an area off Acorn Drive adjacent to Swope Park.

A discussion was held regarding areas in the City that should not be considered for timber harvesting. Mr. Klemarczyk stated that there are some areas that could be looked into for vista work and some areas that have disease that should be addressed. He stated that he will work on providing recommendations of areas that could be left as natural areas and look into proposed clearing projects for vista areas.

The Commission thanked Mr. Klemarczyk for his dedication and continued work.

6a. Cloutier Easement, Hoit Road – Forest Management Plan follow up

At last month's meeting, Ms. Fenstermacher provided a forest management plan for review and approval by the Commission for this easement property as the intent to cut was denied by the Assessor's office as no management plan was on file. The Commission requested that the forest management plan be reviewed by Mr. Klemarczyk. Mr. Klemarczyk stated that he did review the plan and feels that it is a good plan; however, asked when the next harvest would be and what happens after the 2019 harvest.

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4. NHDES items

Ms. Fenstermacher stated that she received informational materials from NHDES, including a copy of the wetlands permit for culvert replacement under 393 and PBN for dredging of Beaver Meadow Golf Course irrigation pond. She noted that it is important that the Commission complete a priority list for the ARM fund projects as the State paid approximately \$27,000 into the ARM fund for the 393 project, whereas that money could have gone directly to the City if we had a project ready to go.

Ms. McClure noted that the NHDES is proposing changes to the wetland application rules. A discussion was held as Ms. Boisvert read information relative to the proposed changes, and comments and concerns from the NH Association of Conservation Commissions (NHACC). Members expressed concern with the lack of processing time that the rule changes proposed, and suggested sending a letter noting these concerns. Ms. McClure noted that the letter should express the importance of application review by a local group that knows the land, instead of relying solely on GIS mapping.

Mr. Kane made a motion, second by Ms. Boisvert, to authorize the Chair to draft a letter concurring with the points noted in the information from NHACC. Members are to send their comments to Ms. Tardiff for her to compile the letter.

5. Reports

a. Trails Subcommittee

Mr. Lewis attended the subcommittee meeting and provided a synopsis for the Commission. He reminded folks of the upcoming hikes. He added that the sub-committee is now fully staffed for trail stewards. The sub-committee is working on putting together their annual report for the CCC noting their goals for 2019 and their accomplishments of 2018. In addition, trail maintenance items were discussed for the upcoming year. The election of officers took place and the result is status quo, Rob Knight as Chair, Tim Pifer as Vice-chair, and Gail Page as the secretary.

Mr. Owers spoke to the proposed formalized trails connecting the backwoods lots – Freese, Martin, and Lassonde lots with Winant Park and Walker State Forest. He stated that this is an ongoing item with the subcommittee.

A discussion was held regarding the trails through Walker State Forest, which would provide access from Little Pond Road to the backwoods trails. Ms. Fenstermacher and Mr. Owers attended a meeting with the Division of Forest and Lands to determine if the State would consider allowing the Commission to blaze and maintain up to three of the existing informal trails; however, permission needs to be granted by the State. Mr. Lewis made a motion, second by Ms. McClure, to send a letter to the state requesting formalization of the three access points for the existing trails. The motion passed 6/0/1. Ms. Boisvert recused herself.

b. Forestry

The Forestry report was previously provided by Mr. Klemarczyk. Ms. Fenstermacher noted that the boundary line blazing of the Martin, Lassonde, and Hardy lots are completed.

c. Concord Tree Committee

Ms. Fenstermacher stated that the next meeting of the Concord Tree Committee's is Friday, January 18.

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d. Local River Advisory Committees

Mr. Chormann stated that the next Upper Merrimack River Local Advisory Committee meeting is January 14.

There is nothing new to report for the Contoocook and North Branch Rivers Local Advisory Committee.

6. City Open Space

a. Cloutier Easement, Hoit Road – Forest Management Plan follow up

This item was previously addressed.

b. Morono Park – City Sewer Access Rd project

Ms. Fenstermacher stated that the reconstruction of the city sewer access road at Morono Park is moving forward. She provided a brief overview of the project. She added that the rebuilding will also allow for the burying of existing invasive species that are on the site.

c. Proposed Tree Work on Conservation Land – Eversource

Ms. Fenstermacher stated that she has received notification from Eversource indicating that they will be doing some tree removal throughout the City; all are within the Eversource powerline rights of way. She noted that one area of concern is along the bluff and in the wetlands of Turkey Pond. She stated that they are indicating that this is for clean up to assure reliability. The City Tree Supervisor, Ryan Rambeau, will be sending a letter to Eversource regarding this cleanup project.

No other areas proposed a concern.

7. City Council/Planning Board

a. Solar Ordinance – Follow-up

Ms. Fenstermacher stated that she gave a presentation to the Planning Board in December explaining the proposed amendments to the ordinance to address solar developments. General discussion ensued. Mr. Lewis provided suggested edits to clarify definitions. Members discussed not allowing development on prime agricultural land. It was noted that any impact from solar could be less of an impact than any subdivisions; however, this ordinance will be allowing a commercial development in districts where it is currently not allowed. Members believe that their original recommendation for 100' buffers is more reasonable than the 50' proposed in the ordinance. There was a question about who would be responsible for mowing and are there provisions for herbicides. Ms. Fenstermacher stated that the maintenance would be borne by the developer. Ms. Fenstermacher stated that she would take the Commission's comments and add them to the report for the Planning Board. Ms. McClure wanted to make sure it was noted that the Commission recognizes climate change is a leading concern of our time, and the Commission supports the goal of eliminating reliance of fossil fuels. However, the City should not compromise the goals of the Open Space Plan and Master Plan as the protection of natural and scenic resources is a fundamental part of Concord's character. Ms. McClure and Mr. Lewis offered to draft a letter to the Planning Board and City Council, and Mr. Lewis will potentially testify at the public hearing. The discussion will continue at the February meeting.

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8. Follow-up/On-going Items:

a. Update Bylaws – Continued to February

b. Country Hill Estates

Mr. Owers stated that the purchase and sales agreement has been sent to Peter Holden. More information relative to the survey issues will be available next month.

c. Easement enforcement policy discussion - continued to a future meeting

d. Conservation Easement Standard Templates - continued to a future meeting

9. Other Business

a. FY20 Budget

Ms. Fenstermacher provided copies of the proposed budget with an accounting explanation.

A motion was made by Mr. Lewis, seconded by Ms. Boisvert, to approve the 2020 budget, as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Commission Reappointments – Alternate Stef Mattlage

Ms. Tardiff stated that Mr. Mattlage is still interested in remaining on the Commission and agreed to be reappointed as an alternate for another term.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Owers made a motion, second by Ms. Boisvert, to adjourn the meeting at 10:25 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Fellows-Weaver
Administrative Specialist