

Town of Jackson
Conservation Commission Minutes
Regular Meeting - December 11, 2023 - 5:30PM
(Unofficial Until Approved)

Present: Pam Smillie, Ben Halcyon, Richard Bennett, Mike Dufilho, and Brian Byrne.

Attendees: Hank Benesh

The meeting was called to order.

Approval of Minutes:

November 2023 Meeting Minutes

Mike made a motion to approve the meeting minutes as written, with the clarification that Eastern Green installed the cedar posts at Jackson Falls, seconded by Brian. All approved.

Prospect Farm:

The first snow of the year drove traffic to Prospect Farm for early season skiing. The parking areas were filled to capacity for much of the week and saw heavy use throughout the day and early evening outside of the normal use pattern. There was a discussion on whether Jackson Ski Touring will have a parking lot attendant to coordinate the lot during peak hours throughout the season.

Jackson Falls:

Handicap Bathroom Parking Sign

Chief Perley contacted the Select Board and informed them that the signage at the “15 minute handicap parking” needed to include the blue Handicap Placard for parking enforcement. Ben thought that there may be a sign in the town garage that could be used. Brian commented that the new signs look very good and have good visibility from the road and that the metal “2 Hour” parking signs should be moved down onto the fence. The most recent plantings of ferns looked good and were ready for winter.

Gray's Inn:

Nothing to report.

Community Garden:

Renewals for garden plots will be starting after New Years and are usually filled by February, Pam said most are renewing but spots will be available.

Wildcat River:

New VRAP Coordinator

The NHDES will have the volunteer river assessment program (VRAP) this year which will run from May-September. There was a discussion regarding the number of locations that will be monitored and the number of volunteers needed. In the past 10 locations were irregularly monitored, the prior VRAP coordinator thought that was a high number of locations for a new program. He recommended two people at each site do the monitoring once a month. Four sites seems like a good initial number and would focus on the Wildcat River at low, mid and high elevation, in subsequent years testing can expand to the larger tributaries. The only time sensitive test that would need to be done is the Fecal Bacteria Count and can be run locally. There was a discussion about how to recruit volunteers and how to conduct a training session or volunteer open house. If we are unable to find volunteers the work may

be able to be done through Green Mountain Conservation Group.

Conservation Easements:

Submit Monitoring Reports by January 15, 2024

Wetlands:

Expedited Minimum Impact Wetlands Permit Application; Meloon Rd. R18-L16

We received notice from North Country Soil Service that this permit has been redesigned based on concerns from NHDES. The proposed impact has been changed from 800 SF to 550 SF. The width of the driveway has been reduced to 14 FT which changes the exit of the culvert, and the abutting property owners have been notified.

Dundee Community Forest:

This will be a new standing agenda item. The Dundee Community Forest Management Committee (DCFMC) held their first meeting and the Commission had a brief discussion regarding how the Commissions representative (Ben) will take action on discussion items. The committee has representatives from various user groups such as Jackson Ski Touring, Granite Backcountry Alliance, Tin Mountain Conservation and the Select Boards and Conservation Commissions from Bartlett and Jackson. Dick felt that since the DCFMC meets quarterly the Commission will have ample opportunity to discuss issues prior to the meeting and that there will be a forum for the public to let their concerns be known and that the judgment of the representative will reflect that. Ben gave a brief synopsis of the meeting. The first issue which came up is a proposed change to the management plan which would expand the allowed uses to include a commercial maple sugaring lease to generate income for conservation management. This model has been used at the Randolph Community Forest and the Doublehead Plot would be ideal for this use. The Select Board representative Peter Benson recommended that an at large member be appointed and that would be reflected in the memorandum of agreement (MOA). The main focus of the MOA is to think of the parcels as a combined whole and not managed as separate "Jackson" and "Bartlett" parcels.

The DCF has several special management areas which reflect unique habitats that deserve special consideration but has created a few issues with programs underway. The proposed trout stream habitat program would require an exemption under the new plan since it would involve cutting and moving woody debris in a riparian area, program manager Rick Van de Pol did not anticipate any issues going forward. Rick Van De Pol who prepared the ecological assessment for the properties thought that each parcel had a unique character that would have different uses. The areas of ridge top old growth trees and animal habitats would be treated much differently than the areas that have had past agricultural and recreational use. This distinction also embraces using land for carbon credits versus traditional forestry practices.

There was a discussion of the recreational uses of the different properties and what uses will be allowed. For winter uses what will be Jackson Ski Touring's role and will trail use require a trail pass. Ben wanted to focus on an expansive concept of multi-use trails, winter use should allow walking in addition to skiing. There are many options for groomed ski touring which does not allow walking or snow shoe use and many people in the community feel shut out of recreational options during the winter which has driven conflict at areas such as Whittaker Woods. Mike pointed out that some of the abutting properties such as Tin Mountain Conservation Area have restricted uses that would be allowed in the DCF which could also create issues. Summer uses such as Mountain Biking have the same potential for conflict. All felt that the areas with unique habitats should be preserved and limits should be placed on human use and that recreation should not be the only consideration.

New Business:

Saco Swift LAC

The LAC is looking for representative from Jackson, Brian Byrne would look into the time requirements before committing.

NH Scenic Road RSA 231:157 and Logging on Dundee Rd.

A question was raised regarding the New England Forestry Foundation logging along Dundee Road, the resident was concerned that the log landing location had disturbed stone walls near the Ham House and had not followed the best management practices regarding buffers along the road. Ben checked if anything had been filed with the intent to log notification, or if a remediation plan had been filed with the planning board. A brief discussion was had regarding notification of a proposed subdivision on Dundee.

Public Comment:

There were no additional comments.

Brian made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dick Seconded. All approved.

Respectfully submitted by Ben Halcyon

To view the full video recording of this meeting visit www.jacksonflicks.com/Jackson