

Conservation Commission Minutes  
June 5, 2017  
5:30 PM, Town Office  
DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED

Present: CC members: Mark Ross-Parent, Brian Byrne, Margaret Graciano, Pam Smillie, Bill Terry, Mike Dufilho

Susan Ross-Parent took notes

Hank Benesh filmed

Guest: Don Johnson, forester

Members of the public: Dick Devalian, Bea Davis, Gino Funicello, Beth Funicello, Melissa ???, Joyce Allen

Review Minutes (May. 1 Meeting , Falls Session): Welcome again to Bill Terry, new member. Motion to approve carries. Minutes approved.

Public Comment: Brian opens floor for public comment. Mark clarifies that it's a comment period, not a discussion period. Bill interjects that he requested that porta potty to be added to agenda. Margaret countered that it was, under the Falls section. Decided to do Jackson Falls section of agenda first.

Dick - presents his letter to CC regarding the new porta potty at Falls. This letter recognizes problems of human waste and erosion but the porta potty site chosen is closest to residences; the slamming door can be heard at the house. Is there another site? (Letter available from CC folder in town offices.)

Dick also referred to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act that calls for reduced use of such areas: please consider.

Bea asked about rumors concerning paving the parking area at the Falls. (Mark explains that parking is a discussion that has been going on for months and that the Selectmen asked CC to advise.) Bea counters that the Selectmen didn't say they brought it to CC (Mark explains that Pat Kelley suggested the paving as a way to control erosion.) Bea said the fence is nice but doesn't belong. (Brian asked if it was understood that the fence is temporary to control foot traffic to prevent erosion. Mike continued that the CC is following guidelines from a soil scientist. This project has gone on 5 years to prevent massive erosion. This was brought to the town and Selectmen and was approved and so CC is following the plan.)

Dick - The Conservation Commission's job is to advise the Selectmen.

Mike - Yes, so CC suggested sites for the porta potty.

Mark - Pat needed to put unit in a more level area, best place to shelter from main part of Falls.

Dick - All agreed, except that it's closest to my house.

Brian - CC did advise that it be put near handicap parking space, but it wasn't the best space for the practical needs.

Beth - Concurs with Dick. Asking that porta potty be removed completely. Makes the Falls more than a limited use area. In addition, there is no parking for Jackson residents. Jackson Chamber of Commerce encourages all day use, not limited use. Potty encourages all day use. Suggested time limit parking. Additions taking away natural wild use: chips, fence, steps, bench? picnic tables...not that safe with rocks for families with kids, anyhow. This restroom is going too far. She expects to see grills next. Notes that it's overboard in allowing this kind of use to go on.

Margaret - Likes Beth's comment on porta potty encouraging longer stays, but they are not leaving to use the restroom elsewhere.

Brian - People are using the woods.

Beth - Why are not more people leading the charge about this?

Mark - Returns to comment about increased parking: spaces have actually been eliminated.

There is now no parking on Valley Cross from Carter Notch to the bridge. Trying to eliminate some parking on Carter Notch Rd.(That is a state road and the process is longer than with town roads.) It might not be known that visitors disregard the signs, and the signs may not be enforced.

Brian - We are not trying to work with Chamber to bring in more tourists.

Margaret - It's tricky: with limited parking, where will they park? On vegetation? CC is working to get signs to show additional parking on Valley Cross Rd. at JSTF parking area. (Businesses want people to visit the Falls.) A longer walk from parking may decrease volume of visitors at Falls.

Mike: Residents ask for limited/zero parking. Others want more. CC is not managing for growth; instead, managing numbers that are there currently. This is a front country facility.

Dick: The plan is in place. CC can force it.

Brian: There hasn't been enough voice from residents to force the document. Residents need to go to the Selectmen.

Joyce: Understands that chips and fence were put in place to control erosion. Would like to limit numbers. Limited parking doesn't seem to work.

Mark: Maybe there will be enforcement by police now that they are fully staffed...like at Diana's Bath.

Pam: Diana's Bath tourists will come to Falls - new No Parking signs from Carter Notch to bridge but not on other side of bridge. That may be a problem for that side of Valley Cross Rd.

Joyce: We need to use as many ways as possible to limit numbers.

Margaret: Some ideas include to park in town. This suggestion went into Chamber brochure. There may be fewer people who will walk the hill.

Mark: Please know: business owners went to Selectmen to get a public bathroom because their businesses were being used as public restrooms.

Bill: Asked for a public facility somewhere...the library lot porta potty is a good response. Didn't see any notes about a porta potty in any of the CC minutes.

Margaret: It's in the November and October 2016 minutes.

Dick: Why isn't dugout used? Full of athletic equipment?

Gino: Explained that "a lady left \$30k to the town" so checked into bathroom to fix up dugout but the Selectmen won't let people use the dugout. At the Falls, police need to enforce 3 hr parking.

Mark - Like so many things we do on CC: we have to see how it goes over time. The rental for the restroom is less than \$130/month and we've got it until Columbus Day. We need to see how it goes and evaluate then.

Dick - Agrees facilities needed with high intensity use. Won't need the porta potty once there is less use.

Mark/Brian: CC is working with current conditions.

Bea - Should fine like Conway.

Gino - Sign paid for but covered by state speed limit - fix that?

Beth - Do a lot a people really come to these meetings?

Brian - Prospect Farm use brought in many residents to discuss. As a member, hears lots at J-Town, PO...

Margaret - As a member hears lots by word of mouth. Suggests a forum would be good for residents to have their say about Falls use.

Melissa - How long does it take for vegetation to take?

Mike: 3-5 years, depending on where planted and which species. We're looking at 5 years. It will depend on where people are walking, any giant storms, (200 seedlings planted over last 2 years, flagged with orange tape.)

Margaret - Low ground cover, like blueberries, is coming back. Other seedlings trampled, some washed out in big storms.

Melissa - Is there an alternative Falls? If close to property owners could we reduce resident taxes for 5 years?

Mike: Lower Falls access no longer has a bridge. Bridge washed out, then the 2 by 4 got washed out - do we maintain or not? Also, erosional disturbance happens so fast, recovery is very slow and we don't know how long it'll take. Please come and join us for a planting.

Melissa - Places like state owned parks put scaffolding around areas but tourists will find alternate places to go. Maybe need scaffolding to protect what's there.

Bill - People are going around the barriers and twine markers - the chips and fence create paths and patterns for people to follow - this will cut back short cuts. Scaffolding will have folks up in arms. Bridge sidewalk being closed is bad enough.

Melissa - Residents won't like 3 year closing?

Brian - We're working with what we have now.

Bill - Praises CC for work done so far. Notes that he is new to the Commission. Encourages citizens to go to Selectmen so that CC is heard better.

Beth - Asks where the CC authority comes from?

Brian: The management plan.

From the audience: good job, impressed

Work Session Minutes Approval: approved.

### Prospect Farm

Don Johnson of Forest Land Improvement - town forester for several years, led timber harvest at Prospect Farm

Don makes a proposal for assessing impact of past cuts at Prospect Farm— is regeneration of vegetation and return of wildlife as expected, in particular in the 20 patch cuts?

Explains: 5 years have passed and it's time to take a walk thru (2-3 days) of Prospect Farm to assess general conditions, erosion of roads and give a report of recommendations, priorities and timeline. Will provide photos. He shows a photo of aerial view with map imposed.

### ORIENTS CC TO MAP

Mark: Tom asks that we get cost, time.

Mike: Would like to discuss this management plan as compared to Forest Service plan in area around (in the FS areas there is too much "early successional growth" according to Dr. Cline.)

Don: His company did much smaller patches - largest at 3 acres, FS does 20 acre - patches of spruce and fir, northern hardwoods, and aspen in short supply, to have 3 age classes, especially for grouse - predators use those areas, woodcock in the deep wet soil areas. Not sure what he'll find, but time to take a look.

Margaret - Did you do the clearing?

Don - Did the layout and marking. Garland at the time, now White Mountain Harvesting, cut to length. Concerned about high water but with cut to length the brush and branches were put in the road to prevent erosion and it worked. It's a mountain and very wet.

Margaret - At the end, in your proposal, would it be for more cutting?

Don - Not sure. Depends on what is found. May propose to keep certain cuts open permanently or cut undesirable trees from others.

Bill - What kind of schedule for review do you propose? 5 to 7 years, more?

Don - The earlier we get in to remove competition for younger trees leads to better results.

Don - Looking at each patch or road he will note conditions and make a proposal to improve/leave the area with priorities and time frame. (Ex. Put a patch cut near beaver pond to give them food - they were running out of young hardwoods.)

Margaret - How about recreational use: CC has its vision for management plan. Will he consider recreation?

Don - Doesn't really consider recreation, except where it is impacted: vistas might be lost. And, they do the work in the winter and that limits recreation for a season or more. Will certainly say if there will be impact.

General discussion: more use in winter now.

Bill: Discusses Locals v Tourists use of trails.

Margaret - Please give a quote for pdf map to be available for print off website.

Don - Discussion of map to download: things to change: YOU ARE HERE won't work if printed and discussion of trail names: Hall's Ledge and Wildcat Valley are one trail until split

Mike: Discussion to have this map match the AMC map since that's the one that's most available. If so, need to clarify: Wildcat River Trail vs Wildcat Valley Trail

Margaret - It was suggested that AMC make a map in exchange for AMC trails crossing town property.

Brian: Wildcat River trail is hiking along river from Prospect Farm area to hut. Wildcat Valley Trail is a ski trail from Wildcat ski area to village.

Brian: Motion to accept Forest Land Improvement proposal to assess Prospect Farm cuts.

Mark: Motions

All agreed

Don: Will make proposal and give estimate.

Bill: Thank you.

Interp. Signs - Margaret relates that Tom sent to proofs to Minute Man with scan of Baker House image from George Howard. George suggests that the signs mention the cuts were done by National Forest as part of their management plan with their name\*\*\*\*\* (what is the name of this cut?)

Work with Larry Garland for new map? Later.

Should Don's fees from original work cover this 5-year review? That wasn't in his original contract. No.

Other signs recently hung up at Prospect Farm - thanks Tom and Margaret.

Fall picnic - plans on-going

Jackson Falls - see above

Fencing – installed, comments - see above

No parking signs – installed, comments? Are there enough, NO PARKING BETWEEN SIGNS is confusing, too much space. A member will call Pat.

Porta Potty – installed, comments? - above

Wood chip work session? Margaret suggested waiting on wood chips until later. Hoping they would age and look darker, less obvious. Brian - get a pile to stash for a year and it will age in a large pile.

Doublehead new ski trail – Granite Backcountry Alliance work session July 29th - to let us know it's happening. Will they decommission the old ski trail? They'll swing it to Dundee Rd. Back to Falls: Grass seed for Falls – needed near table – with stakes and twine

Gray's Inn

Walk trail / install signs - set up time with Mark

New loop? - Later.

Also:

Brian - Hutman's Marsh Brook Trail: there are tire tracks on it. Who's driving on that? FS, JSTF -

Margaret asked how recent?

Brian: Those trails should be closed to motor vehicles. Tracks will invite other drivers.

Ballentine's property, might not be part of Prospect Farm. CC should make a recommendation to Ballentine's because it's access to the land CC manages.

Next meeting: July 10th

Agreed to adjourn at 7:20 PM.

As always, the public is encouraged to attend and share their vision for the use of Jackson town properties and other conservation priorities. Our meetings are typically at 5:30 PM at the town office building on the first Monday of each month