

Conservation Commission Minutes DRAFT until Approved

Dec 2, 2019

5:30 PM, Town Office

Conservation Commission members present: Jeff Sires, Mike Dufilho, Tom Seidel, Bill Terry, Pam Smillie.

Dick Bennett from the Select Board attended to answer questions and see how he, as representative of the Select Board, can help out the Conservation Commission.

Hank Benesh filmed. These minutes were written based on filmed meeting - Susan Ross-Parent

Review Minutes - approved and accepted as written.

New Business - Tom passes on information from a flyer regarding a Climate Strike Demonstration in Conway, Dec. 2, 2019

Prospect Farm - nothing new. Returning to a few meetings ago - discussion of broken interpretive signs - replicate or rewrite? Tom has copies of original wording. Some are interpretive, others just labels.

Dick Bennett suggested contacting mower for Prospect Farm early in the summer so that he can put it on his late summer docket going forward.

Bill Terry returns to Forestry Survey process - was the survey completed and reported to Conservation Commission? Tom says no. This survey is a year out, does CC pursue its completion or drop it? Dick asks for more details on survey: Tom explains that it was commissioned as part of writing a more comprehensive/larger plan for Prospect Farm use, with Forest Management as part of that plan. The current Forest Management plan does not guide in recreational and visitor use of the area. The current plan includes a forest cutting schedule that, while no one is pushing for that now, could be revisited while the logging roads and access to the area are still available. Dick offers to give forester a call with the requests from CC for updates to plan and consideration of it from a more holistic view.

Jackson Falls - Bill asks Dick if the bridge work slated for next year has been finalized? Dick answers that the aesthetics of the bridge are understood to be important and that the abutments, for example, will either be true masonry or a veneer that will look nice as one looks upstream. The trusses may not be used as they are no longer structural and would take a good bit of rehabilitation to integrate them into the design. Reminders that the under structure of the walkway is rotting and that the walkway is unsafe for any use. Dick encouraged the CC's input into the bridge design, mentioning the "pull outs" proposed for the walkway (originally sited at the entrance of the bridge walkway but CC suggested center bridge for a better view down the valley.) Waxing romantic about the bridge as a future site for wedding ceremonies segued into review of permitting and town vs state cost percentages (town 20%, state 80%) The three-way discussion between town, state, and engineering firm on the bridge design is the reality of this project. Whether or not the project is on schedule was not clear to CC or Dick. Tom turns the discussion to paths at the Falls: more wood chips will be ordered in the spring and sturdy roping will be devised to protect newly-planted areas. Set goal of April to have a sign ready for the busy season: Mike is volunteered/volunteers to head up designing and writing the sign - hopefully with a smaller group of interested folks and also at CC meetings over the winter. Sign will probably be placed at the break in the split rail fence after discussion that fence, originally considered only temporary, is doing a good job funneling traffic to the established paths and will remain in place a while longer.

Gray's Inn - Mike reports meeting someone who walked the Mystery House Loop for the first time and really enjoyed it. They reported that all the signs were in place. Views were open and looked great.

Conservation Easement - Tom will ask Susan to mail the easement letters. Reassignments may be needed with change of CC members but currently the 4 SPNHF easements are still covered by sitting CC members. Deadline: Month's end. Bill asks Dick: will the town be ready to take on additional acreage to Tilney easement that is going forward? Dick says yes.

Wetlands - no new business

Annual Report - All 7 CC members need to attend the January meeting for a photo for the annual report. Tom will start writing the annual report with updates on all the work at the Falls, etc.

Tom suggests a new section to the standard agenda: **The Dundee Town Forest**. Tom followed up on William Abbott (Upper Saco Valley Land Trust) and JT Horn's (Trust for Public Lands) visit to CC last month. Tom reports that JT says they will know roughly of funding in the spring and that they'll be looking for interested townspeople to be on that board. Dick mentions that someone from Jeanne Shaheen's office did a walk around on the land and that her office may be able to help out with securing the funding.

Return to old business-

Discussion regarding the trail access at the end of Upper Alpine Dr to the Tin Mountain trails. This has been posted "No Trespassing" with barricades although it has been used to access Tin Mountain trails for 20+ years. Is access connected to the deed? Why did this change - do people still use the trail? Pam asks if there is a history of discussion of town use of this access trail in the cul de sac in the minutes - either CC or with the Selectboard. Dick suggests a letter of inquiry and agrees that consulting the town attorney would be a good idea as there is some historic precedent to a "walking right of way." Bill contends that just because there are trails on a property doesn't give visitors rights to use it. Pam counters that if trails have been used continuously over time the state has a law that protects landowners from liability if someone is hurt using the trails, because it is in the State's interest to keep the land open without having to buy it. This is why landowners must post their land "No Hunting" in such a blanket and specific manner. Perhaps the new landowner is unaware of this practice in NH and Dick could contact them with a letter, then consult the town attorney if a letter proves insufficient.

A short discussion ensued to start inquiries about other access trails to the Tin Mountain property that are no longer frequently used. Uses of the future Dundee Town Forest was readdressed, with Mike mentioning that members of NEMBA (New England Mountain Biking Assoc.) inquiring about mountain bike trails.

Public Comment - none

Meeting adjourned with all in favor.

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.

Respectfully submitted, Susan Ross-Parent, CC Secretary