

Conservation Commission Minutes - DRAFT until APPROVED

January 6, 2020

Present: Tom Seidel, Ken Kimball, Bill Terry, Brian Byrne, Tom Dufilho, Jeff Sires

Guests: Dick Bennett, selectman joined the meeting about 18 minutes in, Bruce McLane presented a petition

Hank Benesh filmed. Susan Ross-Parent wrote minutes based on recording.

Approved December minutes as written

New business

Carbon tax petition to be presented to CC and townspeople:

Mr. Bruce McLane presented a letter to the CC that he plans to present to the select board. He explained that he is participating in the work in which his brother is very involved (in Plymouth) in an effort to get as many towns in NH to go on record at their town meetings to support putting a price on carbon and begin dealing with climate change. Bruce presented supporting information and the petition with the wording of the warrant article that he has been circulating for signatures (He stated that he had 25 signatures at the time of the meeting and wasn't asking for CC member signatures.) Bruce explained the work of the Citizens Climate Lobby - <https://citizensclimatelobby.org/>

Bruce wasn't sure if he wanted the endorsement or support of the CC. He explained that bipartisan efforts were at the state level because there isn't much effort at the national level. NH efforts differ slightly from the national effort. The state would put a fee on the producers of carbon based on the tonnage that they put into the air – large or small industry, individuals with cars, etc., the fees would be charged to any citizens producing carbon as well as industry. The fees would be returned to the citizens of the state – the “carbon cash-back,” the amount collected would be divided by the number of adults in the state and they would be paid from the carbon fees (half that amount for minors.) These fees would offset the rising cost of fuel, etc., as large industrial produces will face larger carbon fees each year. Citizens could use their yearly carbon cash-back to cover the rising cost of fuel or spend it on vehicles, fuels, that do not produce carbon. Canada and other countries have started charging carbon fees. Gov. Sununu has promised to veto the bill at the state level but the hope is that the word from the towns will reach the governor. Bruce hopes to present the warrant at town meeting and that the citizens of Jackson will approve it to send the message to the state house that Jackson supports fees on carbon. Bruce continues by giving examples of families in NH and the amount of carbon cash-back compared to the increased costs. The prediction is that in 12 years there will be a 40% reduction in the production of carbon. He invites CC members to sign if they wish and when appropriate.

Questions from CC:

Q: Are the fees rebated on a per capita basis? A: Yes – minors get 50% of adult cash-back.

Bruce compared the carbon fee to septic fees with the addition of a cash rebate each year.

Q: How much do you expect the tax to be incurred at the pump? A: The NH proposal is \$20 per ton of carbon put into the air. It's up to the companies to set the costs. It is in their interest not to raise their prices too much to recoup the costs of the carbon fees they are charged and to find alternatives to carbon-producing fuels, etc. This is predicted to drive new industries (solar, wind) and clean up old ones.

Q: NH doesn't have carbon-heavy industry like other states. How does this work for NH? A: Bruce explains that the examples he was given include charging tankers coming into Portsmouth.

Q: So products that will be assessed a fee include oil coming in the state, electricity, gasoline, heating fuel, plastics... A: Yes, products made with petroleum. If enough state adopt this on their own, then perhaps the federal government would put something similar in place and the state fees would no longer be needed.

Bruce requested help in finding someone to present the warrant to the town meeting – maybe someone from CC?

Q: How would the carbon fee compare to REGI - now cap and trade? A: Those programs are "peanuts" compared to this...but, NH won't sign on to do this until at least 2 bordering states adopted it as well.

Q: Other resources? A: Google carbon cash-back NH. There is also a Wall Street Journal article that supported it - <https://www.wsj.com/articles/economists-statement-on-carbon-dividends-11547682910>

Search words: carbon-cash-bac-coalition

CC decides to study up on this proposal before committing to supporting it. They will discuss in the next meeting in time for the town meeting.

Tom proposes skipping the regular agenda and instead look at properties to concentrate on and issues for 2020 and go over the annual report. In addition, conservation easement reports for SPNHF are due.

Goal 1: Gather and compile all easement documentation. Reread all easements.

Goal 2: Tom will upload all the documents he has into the google drive that is part of the CC email.

Annual Report: critiques and changes, review of work CC did last year, guide for work to do in 2020

Review of Prospect Farm section led to discussion of forest management plan:

Dick Bennett reported that he followed up with Don Johnson about Prospect Farm. Don will come to a CC meeting soon to go over the forest management plan and introduce his successor.

Ken queried if a forest management plan was necessary at this time if CC did not plan to cut soon because forest management plans go out of date in about 5 years.

During the last cutting at Prospect Farm the National Forest was cutting so since the area was closed to skiing CC did some cutting, too. That may not be the case this time around.

Mike suggests that the plan could ID areas that may never be cut, specific species that will be target cuts, etc., in a broader view and period of time as a guide to management instead of time line for the cutting in the next five years.

Dick agreed that a 10-15 year guide would be useful.

Mike discussed the efforts of Tin Mountain Conservation on their Bear Paw Lands where their forest management plan breaks the acres into zones based on soil types, plant life, use (trails,) etc. Each zone is described and the management of each is outlined.

Funding for the plan could be requested at the next town meeting. Mowing currently is covered by the recreation fund. Capital improvements come from an account of accumulating permit fees.

Ken reminds the group that the forest plan is only part of the whole plan and that a recreation plan must be considered at the same time to avoid conflict. Working with Don for starters to see if he would like to work with the CC on the forest-recreation combination plan or if CC should look for another forester with that kind of use experience.

Bill suggests requesting an additional \$2000 – for \$4000 be the total for the next year.

Funds from the last cutting may have gone to the CC account – memory is fuzzy. Properties coming out of current use - those fees go to the CC account.

Motion to request \$4000 for forestry plan, recreation plan, and other CC expenses.

\$1000 for the Falls (compost, plants, sod) could also come from the trust fund. This is how the split rail fence was funded in years past.

More on annual report:

Add library use of trails of Mystery Loop for solstice celebration, story walk, etc. Brian recommends use of the trails.

Wording and specifics for volunteer training were clarified. “Jeff does a lot of stuff.”

Discussion ensued regarding the water precinct work in the wet area behind the electric station and Red Fox Restaurant.

Tom agrees to submit annual report with changes discussed.

Motion to adorn.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Ross-Parent