

Town of Jackson Conservation Commission
Minutes - November 2nd, 2020 - Regular Meeting
- UNOFFICIAL UNTIL APPROVED

Call To Order: Jeff Sires, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:02 P.M. Attending were Members Jeff Sires, Ken Kimball, Tom Seidel, Ben Halcyon, Mike Dufilho, Brian Byrne, Pam Smillie, and Selectman's Representative Dick Bennett. Public attendees included Barbara Theriault, William Abbott, and Hank Benesh. Audio and video recorded via the Zoom platform will be made available on Jacksonflicks.com.

Approval Of Minutes: Minutes from the October 5th meeting were reviewed. Due to technical difficulties regarding the audio/video recording of the October 5th meeting, only abbreviated notes were submitted for approval. Jeff received information from town administrator Julie Hoyt that the Conservation Commission should, according to New Hampshire municipal law, only operate and vote with a maximum of seven Members. Previously, the Commission had been attended by eight voting members: seven full-time Members and a Selectman's Representative. Jeff spoke with Dick, and they agreed that Dick would not participate as a regular voting member in this and future meetings, in order to satisfy state law. In addition, because the minutes were only abbreviated, some portions of discussion may not have been included in the draft set before the Commission for approval. Jeff stated his intent to work with Will to improve recording fidelity and, by proxy, develop complete drafts of future minutes.

Ken motioned to approve the minutes, and Tom seconded. The motion was carried unanimously, and the minutes were approved.

Upper Saco Valley Land Trust (USVLT) Presentation/Discussion: The Commission recognized William Abbott, Executive Director of the USVLT, to present information on Land Trust projects. William presented the scope of the Dundee Community Forest project (working name), then elaborated on finer details and plans for future activity. He also expressed the Land Trust's interest in forming an advisory committee for the project, consisting of Board Members from town organizations in the Towns of Bartlett and Jackson. After a detailed presentation of the project's budget, William asked the Commission to consider contributing to the budget by drawing from its Land Use Change tax fund.

Ken asked if the town would end up with any ownership of the Community Forest property or if the property would be owned by the USVLT with easement(s) owned by the state; William answered that the latter would be the case. Ken also asked what percentage of the land was located in Bartlett, stating that, if the majority of the land did lie in Bartlett, the residents of Jackson might want to see contributions from Bartlett before pitching in. William responded that,

to his knowledge, the Bartlett Conservation Commission was not being allocated Land Use Change tax funds and would therefore not be in a position to contribute.

Ken explained that, when Current Use is voted in by the town, it only permits the Conservation Commission to use it to purchase lands to be owned either in easement or in fee by the town. An exception occurs if/when the town takes a second vote, allowing the Commission to pass money to an NGO where the town has no ownership of the property. This vote, however, had never occurred in Jackson, and so the Commission could not take money out of its Land Use Change tax fund without a town vote on the matter. Jeff supported Ken's explanation and described the procedure of pursuing the idea further:

1. Determine whether or not the Jackson Conservation Commission will contribute to the project's budget.
2. Submit a town warrant article outlining the Commission's authority to expend funding from their tax fund to qualified organizations (including USVLT) for conservation efforts.
3. Hold a public hearing on the topic of contribution and have the Commission vote whether or not to approve the expenditure.

Ken indicated that issues with the Current Use and General Management Plan of Prospect Farm had a high priority and so suggested that either the Commission resolve those issues before considering the USVLT's project or the prospective contribution be decided by town vote. After further discussion, Jeff suggested that a sub-committee be formed from members of the Commission to continue talks with William and the USVLT about the Dundee Community Forest project and the Commission's potential contribution to the project's budget. Ben and Ken volunteered to form the sub-committee; Mike and Tom also expressed interest in joining and agreed to discuss the topic together at a later time. Jeff motioned to formally create the sub-committee, and Ben seconded. The motion was carried unanimously, and the sub-committee was formed.

Jackson Falls Committee Update: The Commission recognized Barbara Theriault, Chair of the Save Jackson Falls (SJF) Committee, to comment on recent developments within the committee. Barbara informed the Commission that a letter and questionnaire had been finalized and were ready to be distributed to those on the Town of Jackson voting list on November 4th. The committee would return to the Commission with results of the survey at a later date.

Jackson Falls Signage: Mike contacted Larry Garland, photographer with Appalachian Mountain Club, to potentially help develop a map of the Falls area. Larry also offered to help design the interpretive aspects of the signage.

Prospect Farm: In response to comments and suggestions about obtaining public input at the previous Conservation Commission meeting, Ken developed a questionnaire about points of interest for a prospective General Management Plan for Prospect Farm and feedback about the existing Plan draft. He posed a few questions to the Commission in regards to the questionnaire:

1. *When should the questionnaire be sent out?* Ken advised waiting to send the questionnaire out until after Thanksgiving, due to potential overlap with the SJF Committee's survey between time of meeting and the holiday.
2. *To whom should the questionnaire be directed, and through which medium/media?* Ken suggested using Jackson eNews to promote access to the questionnaire in order to target full-time residents as well as non-resident taxpayers. The likelihood of acquiring responses outside of this demographic, he stated, would be slim.
3. *What questions should be asked?* Ken devised some questions with input from Mike and Brian, along with a cover letter for the questionnaire. The questions are less technical and more general, regarding users and user interest. He suggested that, as the Plan undergoes development, the Commission might solicit more specific suggestions from their target audience.

Mike suggested that the questionnaire be distributed to as wide a demographic as possible, as residents in other nearby towns might have some interest in the Plan. Tom and Jeff agreed with this suggestion. Ken asked whether the questionnaire could be created using SurveyMonkey, but the limitation of service to non-paying users posed a potential roadblock. Jeff suggested using Google Forms, which would offer a similar format and features. He also asked whether the questionnaire ought to be distributed using the Jackson Ski Touring Foundation's (JSTF) mailing list. Ken offered to make contact with the Foundation to ask about using their mailing list. Tom recommended adding a question asking whether the survey-taker is aware of the boundaries between the town's property and the National Forest. Ken agreed that this question would be appropriate.

Jeff suggested having the questionnaire sent out in December but also recognized regular mailings from the JSTF going out around Thanksgiving. Ken suggested that the questionnaire mailing could coincide with one of the JSTF's regular mailings, and Jeff agreed. Jeff stated his intent to create the questionnaire using Google Forms, and Ken stated his intent to contact the JSTF about collaborating on their regular mailing to include a link to the questionnaire.

Dick spoke with the town forester about marking the boundaries. He said the forester would be able to make it up to Prospect Farm in the Spring of 2021, if not during Autumn of 2020. Ken reported that the JSTF had been there to reset a blown-out culvert. They offered to use their equipment, if it is still present there, to re-dig the water bars on the orchard path and along the Wildcat Valley Trail toward Halls Ledge. Jeff motioned to allow JSTF to clean up the water

bars, and Brian and Tom seconded. The motion was carried unanimously, and the Commission granted the JSTF permission to use their equipment to repair the water bars.

Wildcat River: There were no updates on this item at time of meeting.

Gray's Inn: There were no updates on this item at time of meeting.

Conservation Easements: Ben met with the Tillneys; everything was in order. They were considering placing another parcel into easement. He offered to follow up with them, in light of the meeting's discussions about the Dundee Community Forest project. Brian spoke with Alex Burgiss, but the two had not yet met at time of meeting. He intends to keep in touch with Alex and arrange a meeting.

Wetlands: There were no updates on this item at time of meeting.

New Business: Jeff received a notice that the Commission must complete their annual report by January, including an updated photo with the Members.

Public Comment: Public attendees did not express any public comments for non-agenda discussion.

Jeff motioned to adjourn the meeting, and Mike seconded. The motion was carried unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 9:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by Will Reisig