

**TOWN OF BEDFORD
CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES
June 25, 2019**

A meeting of the Bedford Conservation Commission was held on Tuesday, June 25, 2019 at the Bedford Meeting Room, 10 Meetinghouse Road, Bedford, NH.

Present: Dave Gambaccini (Vice Chair), Denise Ricciardi (Town Council), Mac McMahan (Planning Board Representative), Maggie Wachs, James Drake, Patricia Grogan (Alternate) Rebecca Hebert (Planning Director/Zoning Administrator).

Absent: Beth Evarts (Chairwoman), Catherine Rombeau (Town Council Alternate), Bob Macpherson, Bill Carter (Alternate), Gregory Schain (Alternate), Karin Elmer (Planning Department).

Call to Order

In Chairwoman Evarts absence Mr. Gambaccini acted as Chair for this meeting and called the Bedford Conservation Commission meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

Mr. Gambaccini read the opening statement: The mission of the Bedford Conservation Commission is to protect, preserve and conserve the town's natural resources and open space land. The Commission works with landowners by reviewing permits and administering State and Town wetlands regulations, advises other Town Boards on environmental impacts, and recommends alternative considerations regarding development or improvement projects.

Approval of Minutes:

- May 28, 2019 Conservation Commission Minutes –

Only two voting members were present, so the May 28, 2019 were not able to be approved and voted on. They will be tabled for approval at the next meeting.

Dredge and Fill Applications:

- None

New Business:

- Jonathan Stodolski – Presentation of proposed Eagle Scout Project for the Heritage Trail

Jonathan Stodolski of Bedford, NH introduced himself. He is a member of Eagle Scout Troop 5 in Bedford, NH and a candidate for an Eagle Scout project. He contacted the Town about needed

projects and in talking to Ms. Elmer discovered that there is a need at Heritage trail for picnic tables and a carry-in/carry-out sign to inform hikers how to care for and preserve the trail. He would like to take this on for his Eagle Scout project. He wishes to build two handicapped-accessible picnic tables. It is very important for him that the picnic tables be handicapped-accessible, so that everyone may enjoy the Heritage Trail and no one is excluded. Making the picnic tables handicapped-accessible is simple enough to do, but often overlooked. The picnic table area currently has two picnic tables that are not handicapped-accessible. He would like to place one of the picnic tables he will build at the picnic table area and would like to place the other at the head of the trail. He asked the Conservation Commission if the carry-in/carry-out sign is needed at the head of the trail or by the picnic table area. Mr. Gambaccini replied that the Conservation Commission will work on that with him and see that the correct person provide him an answer.

Mr. Stodolski's timeline is to get the picnic tables done before the end of the summer so that people can enjoy them and have them ready for Fall foliage season. The picnic tables will be made out of pressure treated wood so they will last longer. He did some research on what type of sign would be best: Wooden sign vs. metal sign. When he walked the trail, he noticed a lot of vandalism to the signs on the trail, so opted out of making wooden signs. After further online research he feels the better choice is to purchase a metal sign with an aluminum coating on it which makes it graffiti-proof.

Mr. Gambaccini opened the floor for questions, and asked Mr. Stodolski what makes the picnic table handicapped accessible. Mr. Stodolski explained that the picnic table has an extended portion where the seats are cut short so a wheelchair can approach the table from either side. Anyone can sit at this type of table and it is very inclusive.

Mr. Gambaccini asked the cost of the metal signs. Mr. Stodolski informed him that the metal signs cost \$36, but he feels it is well worth it because of the anti-graffiti coating. If a wooden sign was used it would need to be engraved at an added cost and will not last as long. The metal sign also has an easy to understand graphic to indicate that no littering is allowed.

Mr. Stodolski plans on holding a fundraiser to finance his Eagle Scout project. He estimates it will cost about \$500 for both picnic tables and the sign, and he plans to do a bake sale at Harvest Market to raise the needed funds. Ms. Hebert asked him to be sure to let us know the date of the bake sale.

Mr. McMahan shared a thought. He thinks making it a handicapped-accessible table might be a dual-edged sword since some people may not want to sit there because of that; but on the other hand, if they do elect to sit there and someone in a wheelchair approaches there should be some way for them to realize that the table is handicapped-accessible so they know they should give up their table.

Mr. Stodolski asked if a metal post or a wooden post for the sign is preferred. Mr. Gambaccini again said this is something the Conservation Commission can work with him on because he doesn't have an answer at the moment and would need to look into it for him and find out what has been done at some of the other trails and parks. Mr. McMahan asked Stodolski when he would need that information, so it will not interfere with his schedule. Mr. Stodolski indicated that the next Eagle Scout meeting isn't until August 7th, so he would need to know the answer by then. The fundraiser would take place after the Eagle Scout meeting on August 7th and then he would need to get supplies and then plan his workdays and install day. Ms. Hebert indicated that Ms. Elmer can work with him about the details of the sign location and mounting requirements.

Ms. Ricciardi indicated that she appreciated his research and thanked him for his presentation and could see that a lot of hard work was put into it. Ms. Grogan also thanked him for his project and shared that she does a lot of hiking and can tell him that the "leave no trace" signs are usually located at the trailheads as people enter. Mr. McMahan asked if we could get advertisements promoting the bake sale on BCTV to help to make sure he makes enough money to fund his project. Ms. Hebert indicated that he should touch base with Ms. Elmer about getting the advertisements on BCTV, as well.

MOTION by Mr. Drake to accept the Eagle Scout project presented by Jonathan Stodolski, candidate for Eagle Scout, Troop 5 Bedford for picnic tables and signage at the Heritage Trail. Ms. Wachs seconded the motion. Vote taken – all in favor. Motion carried.

Old Business:

- Update on Pulpit Rock Conservation Area ongoing modifications

Ms. Hebert reported that she, Ms. Evarts, and Ms. Elmer met with Ron Klemarczyk from FORECO to review Phase 2 of the trail improvements. Ms. Hebert and Chairwoman Evarts walked the trail improvements with Mr. Klemarczyk and developed a scope of work which involves some drainage improvements along the existing improved part of the trail (from the trailhead on Pulpit Road), as well as extending the crushed stone/hard pack surface through the area where that type of surface was discontinued and there is just rough dirt. The improvements will extend the hard pack surface another 800 feet. This is something the State of New Hampshire wanted as an improvement for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant that the Town received for trail improvements. Mr. Klemarczyk is also proposing some changes to the trail alignment to the Red Trail beyond the Indian Rock. The preliminary scope of work was sent to the State for approval. If they approve the suggested improvements as part of Phase 2 under the existing grant, Ms. Elmer will share that information at the July Conservation Commission meeting. No construction is currently planned. Right now, they are trying to work out the details and make sure the Phase 2 scope of work is covered under the existing grant.

Mr. Drake asked if another vote would be needed to match funds. Ms. Hebert indicated that is correct. She believes Mr. Klemarczyk's work and time on the project would cover the town's match. A spreadsheet and second phase of the work has been sent to the State for their review and approval. Mr. Drake asked if a vote was needed on the base contract. Ms. Hebert indicated that is correct. The second phase of work would need to be authorized. She said Ms. Elmer wanted to make sure that the scope of work for Phase 2 was approved by the State because there could be some modifications to it and it is important that all work in Phase 2 falls under the existing grant that the town has acquired for improvements. The State agreed to extend the grant so that we could take advantage of that funding.

Mr. Drake asked what drainage work Mr. Klemarczyk needs to do on the improved part of the trail. Ms. Hebert explained that as you come down from the parking lot there is a little bit of erosion and ditching along the side of the trail that needs improvement. The work consists of minor tweaks and improvements to make the water flow a little better.

- Update on Greenfield Farms boundary marking

Ms. Hebert shared a memo from Ms. Elmer to update everyone about the easement monitoring at the Greenfield Farms development that has been taking place for over a year now. Initial easement monitoring for all of the open space at the Greenfield Farms development has been completed. The open space consists of about 109 acres abutting backyards of homes in the Greenfield Farms subdivision. The development was built in 8 phases and is quite extensive with 15 roads and 250 homes. Mr. Klemarczyk was the contracted consultant that did the field monitoring. He walked the boundary of the conservation easement and identified areas where there were encroachments or violations to the easement. Nineteen violations were identified which were mainly swing sets encroaching into the conservation easement, or people extending their yard beyond the limit of their property. In most cases, the homeowner had no idea there was a conservation easement abutting their backyard. Mr. Klemarczyk is marking the boundary of the easement with painted blazes and placing plastic medallions indicating that the land is protected by the Conservation Commission. The plastic medallions are being placed on trees when possible using a method that is not harmful to the trees and still allows them to grow. In areas where the easement abuts an open area or an open field he is mounting the medallions on a metal post at select areas and where property lines intersect. This should increase awareness of the easement and throughout the development and prevent future encroachments.

Mr. Drake asked if the medallion design had been changed. Ms. Hebert explained that they previously used metal square signs on metal posts. These square metal signs had pointy corners and the concern was that they might harm children or pets coming into contact with them while playing in their yard near the signs or that they might be pulled up and used like a spear, so that is why we chose new plastic medallions that are round and flexible in order to alleviate that concern.

Mr. Drake asked if Mr. Klemarczyk had been engaged to do the easement monitoring of all our properties. Ms. Hebert indicated that was correct and that Mr. Klemarczyk had completed monitoring of all the easements. Mr. Drake asked if any of the 19 violations were outside of Greenfield Farms. Ms. Hebert indicated all of the 19 violations were within Greenfield Farms.

Mr. Drake asked how many violations we have on our conservation land outside of Greenfield Farms. Ms. Hebert indicated there were none to speak of, only some areas where there may have been lawn clippings being dumped into the easement area or a renegade ATV trail that hadn't been in use for a long time. In Greenfield Farms the homes are so tight against the easement area and the land is so open; therefore, many violations were found there. There were no violations that cannot be resolved. All that was needed, for example, was to tell a homeowner that they have to stop mowing a portion of the land beyond their property or to move a shed or swing set.

Mr. McMahan asked if the public took this information well. Ms. Hebert indicated that they did and everyone contacted has been very cooperative. All of the landowners in the development were contacted by letter from the Planning Department prior to Mr. Klemarczyk walking the area to do the easement monitoring so there would be awareness of why someone was walking the woods behind their properties.

Mr. Drake asked if Mr. Klemarczyk placed signs on all of the boundaries of our properties or just Greenfield Farms. Ms. Hebert indicated right now his focus is on Greenfield Farms. Mr. Drake asked if Mr. Klemarczyk's contract engaged him to do the boundary marking on all of the properties we have easements on, or just Greenfield Farms. Ms. Hebert said it's a good question. She needs to go back and look at his contract because it was about 2 years ago that Mr. Klemarczyk did all of the easement monitoring. She believes that he also looked for bounds because he typically reblazes bounds in the field if they are faded, but we can look into this to find an answer for sure. Greenfield Farms easement monitoring specifically included boundary marking and identifying the easement area with the plastic medallions.

Mr. Drake asked if we have a contract with Mr. Klemarczyk to do easement monitoring work annually, because this is the type of thing the Conservation Commission used to do. Ms. Hebert indicated that is something the Conservation Commission should discuss now that we are coming to the end of the first round of contracted easement monitoring. Mr. Drake indicated that he, and perhaps Mr. McMahan and Ms. Ricciardi may remember that in the past each member of the Conservation Commission was assigned 4-5 properties and had to go out and complete easement monitoring. Ms. Hebert understands it is a lot of hard work going out into the field and locating the boundaries, but it is important to know how to find the boundaries and where they are located. Mr. Drake indicated that the Conservation Commission members are not necessarily experienced in doing that, so engaging someone professional to do it makes sense. Ms. Hebert indicated it is much easier to catch the encroachments when you are diligent with monitoring otherwise you could end up with a portion of a building or pool or something unexpected partially in the easement that could be onerous to correct.

Ongoing annual easement monitoring will be added to the next meeting agenda.

Mr. Gambaccini asked where violations were recorded, and who is managing that. Ms. Hebert indicated that Ms. Elmer has a spreadsheet of the 19 easement violations for Greenfield Farms and reached out to each of those landowners with a letter informing them of an encroachment onto the town's conservation easement, and she is working one-on-one with them to resolve the easement violation. There have been no issues, and everyone has been cooperative. Many were

unaware of the easement and what it means and were initially taken aback that such a thing even existed.

- Update on GPS Trail Marking

Ms. Hebert reported that Brandon Beauvais has been contracted to complete the GPS Trail Marking. He is working with Chairwoman Evarts to send the GPS information to the trail marker application that is managed by the University of New Hampshire. He worked until mid-November and he will complete mapping of another 5 trail areas this summer. Most of those 5 trails are very small. The biggest is the Joppa Hill Farm Trail.

Enclosures:

- None

Other Business:

Mr. Drake asked about the status of the forest management plan now that the woolly adelgids have had another year to eat away at our forests. Ms. Hebert knows second hand that the Commission discussed a forest management plan and it was put out to bid, but we did not receive a wide variety of proposals for the work, in fact we only received one proposal. It's her understanding that that the Commission wanted to hold off and that Chairwoman Evarts met with the County Forester to look at ways to modify the scope to perhaps attract more proposals for the work. This issue could be placed on the next agenda so we can move it along. Chairwoman Evarts could speak to this topic more accurately because she has put a lot of thought into this, done research, and talked to the County Forester about what would work best at Pulpit Rock because it's not a property that would be managed actively for forestry resources, so typically a forester will come in and prescribe timber cut for a property. A landowner would benefit from the profit of the sale of the trees, and that is not how Pulpit Rock is managed. In Pulpit Rock's conservation area logging is restricted to only what is needed for forest health. The woolly adelgid remains an ongoing problem, however.

Mr. Drake indicated that he just hiked Ammonoosuc this weekend and came across many devastated evergreens. It did not look like it was a result of the woolly adelgids, so it must have been caused by something else. Mr. McMahan asked if the devastated trees were hemlocks, but Mr. Drake indicated they were spruces. They were decimated, and it looked pretty brutal. In addition, while driving to the meeting tonight Mr. Drake indicated he saw another evergreen that looked like it had been attacked. He feels it would be prudent to get someone out to look at our forests and figure out our management plan A.S.A.P. so we are not behind the eight ball with something that may have already devastated the forest we've got. There are a lot of evergreens out there, and if we don't manage them properly we won't have much of a forest left. You don't often see fir trees completely without needles like he saw at Ammonoosuc this weekend, and we don't want that to happen in Bedford. Mr. McMahan said it will be a real problem if it turns out to be a beetle. Mr. Drake indicated he didn't know what it was, but it looked like there was some kind of moss growing on the trees, so it would be prudent to have an expert look into it and look into whether there are any invasive species. He feels it makes sense to bring an expert in to

identify the problem, look at the issues we have, look for invasive species and provide a report so we can devise a solution or at least a management plan. Ms. Hebert asked if the Conservation Commission had already reviewed the forest management plan. Mr. Drake believed it had been held back because there was only a single proposal which was never even distributed to the Commission for review, and there was an issue of resources considering where the proposal came from. Perhaps the resources are freed up now and we could proceed. The last time Mr. Drake talked with Chairwoman Evarts about it was back in January.

Ms. Hebert will add this to the next meeting agenda and talk with Chairwoman Evarts about distributing the proposal. As an offshoot of that, Mr. Drake believes as soon as we completed that we were going to devise our approach for the rest of our conservation lands and have everything fully assessed. We could also add those assessments to the website, so people could click on them and learn about our natural resources, our management plans, and everything else about each piece of property under our care

Adjournment:

MOTION by Mr. Drake to adjourn at 7:34 pm. Ms. Wachs seconded the motion. Vote taken – all in favor. Motion carried.

The next meeting of the Conservation Commission will be July 23, 2018.

Respectfully submitted,
Tiffany Lewis