

City of Keene
New Hampshire

CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Monday, December 19, 2016

4:30 PM

**2nd Floor Conference Room,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Thomas P. Haynes, Chair
George Hansel, Councilor
Jan Manwaring, Councilor
Dr. Brian Reilly
Thomas Lacey
Sadie Butler

Staff Present:

Tara Kessler, Planner

Members Not Present:

Denise Burchsted
Andrew Madison, Alternate

1) Call to Order

Chair Haynes called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM.

2) Approval of Minutes – November 21, 2016

Councilor Hansel made a motion to accept the minutes of November 21, 2016 with the following correction: on Page 4 of 6, 5th paragraph 3rd line, change Land Use Tax Fund to Land Use Change Tax Fund. Mr. Lacey seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

3) Communication and Notifications – None at this time.

4) Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Plan

Ms. Kessler distributed copies of 1) Landowner History and Goal Assessment Form, 2) Request for Qualifications Forest Management Plan, and 3) draft Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Plan Request for Qualifications (RFQ).

Addressing the Landowner History and Goal Assessment Form Ms. Kessler noted the Cooperative Extension has provided this form to private property owners when they are trying to figure out how they want to manage their forests/lands. She explained that Mr. Wozmak had recommended the Commission go through this exercise for the Goose Pond area. Ms. Kessler continued there are other Departments in the City that have a say over

this property such as Parks & Recreation. Chair Haynes requested Commission complete the form for the January meeting as a homework assignment.

Ms. Kessler noted the second handout is the RFQ developed by Mr. Wozmak for the Airport Forest Management Plan.

Addressing the draft Greater Goose Pond Stewardship Plan Ms. Kessler explained she is calling it a stewardship plan because of the Conservation Easement and the agreement with the Society for Protection of New Hampshire Forests. This agreement calls for a stewardship plan and lists elements to be included therein. Ms. Kessler added she tried to bring the elements listed into the draft RFQ. She also pointed out the areas in the draft that need additional work; the qualifications, project objectives, schedule, and some other standard RFQ components. For today Ms. Kessler suggested discussion pertain to Page 3 of 4, Section VI. Scope of Services. She suggested reading the section before beginning the discussion.

Discussion:

Ms. Kessler noted she would correct the paragraph lettering following the letter "F".

Councilor Hansel asked if the Commission would be the Steering Committee for this. Ms. Kessler explained her rationale noting this draft is just a starting place and there might be some value in having involved in this conversation.

Ms. Kessler explained the intent is that a team would be brought on to develop the Stewardship Plan with a few different components; some are requirements from the Conservation Easement. Any actions to be taken need to be identified in the Stewardship Plan; she noted there is reference to forestry, agriculture, and additional recreation that might take place.

In section A. Ms. Kessler noted much of this is already done and the intent is to draw from what is already there and then verify its accuracy. Chair Haynes asked if vernal pools should be added when listing things or if it is covered under Streams and Ponds. After additional comments Ms. Kessler indicated vernal pools does come up somewhere else in the document; but if the Commission feels it is important it should be noted for those consultants responding. Councilor Manwaring noted vernal pools are mentioned on Page 4 of 4, in 5. Special Features Map.

Councilor Hansel asked for the current balance of the Land Use Change Tax Fund. Ms. Kessler replied she was unsure when the annual contribution comes in but when she last looked the balance was approximately \$70,000.

Ms. Kessler continued noting section C. calls for a recreational assessment of low-intensity uses as called for in the Easement. She also noted there is a lot of trail work going on today that may have more impact than the Commission is aware of today. Additionally, high-intensity activities are not recommended. Discussion ensued with Ms. Kessler advising she would verify whether or not motorized vehicles are restricted. In response to Chair Haynes, Councilor Manwaring reported she has never seen any

horseback riding there and the area is not really conducive to horseback under the Motorized section it specifically says it is not permitted unless otherwise specified. Mr. Lacey suggested further investigation is needed for motorized recreation such as ATV usage.

Continuing her review Ms. Kessler noted “G” is really the bulk of it. Ms. Kessler explained in G.1 she added, after the fact, that they could produce revenue estimates. Ms. Kessler advised she would have to verify the language and ask the consultants if this gives them the information they need to respond appropriately. Ms. Kessler pointed out she added G.3 because the Commission has been discussing this topic. Commission members were in agreement with this addition. Continuing, Ms. Kessler indicated G.7 might need to be reworded; the intent is the Commission might want to look at the biologically significant areas for more special management considerations. Councilor Hansel suggested saying identifying outstanding scientific, educational, and biological areas instead of setting aside. Chair Haynes noted this determination would be made down the road.

Ms. Kessler addressed H. pointing out the property is right next to our boundary with Gilsum and connects to a much larger ecosystem. She suggested having some language in the plan about the connection to the larger ecosystem to help with the development of a citywide conservation plan. Councilor Hansel commented he would like to see forms that could be used or a roadmap on smaller parcels in the City. Discussion ensued and Councilor Hansel clarified he would like to see the Landowner History and Goal Assessment Form tailored to the Commission’s needs. Ms. Kessler suggested H. or another section might need to be modified to create a template. Councilor Hansel suggested verbiage be added such as “develop landowner assessment form template for the City to use”. Mr. Lacey noted his findings from reading the existing NRI’s as being 1) recreation needs to be a priority, and 2) somewhere along the line there was the very clear idea that money was not the underlying reason for managing the property. Mr. Lacey also addressed harvesting noting the 2009 document that said there should be no timber harvesting on public lands at all. Mr. Lacey noted these are voices in the history of the potential management of Goose Pond. Mr. Lacey commented the draft hits on a lot of the high points; and asked if the Commission should now prioritize. Mr. Lacey referred to section G. and suggested how to set up the harvest should not appear to be a priority; it should be under the topic of habitat management (G.5.). Discussion continued with Mr. Lacey commented this will help people understand why people are in there managing and will lessen being a target for people who do not have anything but wilderness. Ms. Kessler suggested this might need to be upfront in the Project Overview on Page 1. She suggested making the intent clear; it is for enhancing the wildlife habitat and maintaining the health and diversity of the forest. Chair Haynes commented he liked this suggestion (language change) so that it does not look like we are harvest focused. Referring to G.1 Ms. Kessler suggested removing the second line after “A work plan for silvicultural operations”. She continued the Commission could always go back and see if someone could add something if the thought is we are not getting what we want. Councilor Hansel noted it would be nice to see the revenue estimates included. After additional comments Mr. Lacey noted we could get pushback and suggested being sensitive. Mr. Lacey also commented the revenue stream should not be the priority as we will get one (revenue stream) anyway. Mr. Lacey also commented this property should not cost the City a cent to operate. Discussion ensued with regards to paying for the recommendations. Councilor Hansel suggested rather than saying “projected revenue estimates” perhaps we could add language about making

the property economically self-sustaining. Commission members were in favor of this suggestion. Councilor Manwaring also raised the issue of the maple syrup operation which falls under the agricultural aspect. Chair Haynes noted this would have to be further researched, and he knew that Mr. Lamb had been working on this in the past. No members present knew what that outcome had been.

Another concern noted by Councilor Manwaring was Eversource's presence out there and the effects of the transmission lines. She indicated this would also be relevant when the Commission gets to Beech Hill. Councilor Manwaring indicated she would check with Mr. Lamb to see if the old truck had been removed from the area.

At this point Ms. Kessler clarified what she has gathered from this conversation is 1) consideration for agricultural uses or potential uses that would be in compliance with what is identified in the Deed, 2) consideration for the transmission lines and the impact the Right-of-Way has running through the property, 3) trying to build into letter G. whatever the recommendations are produced they be economically viable, or to the greatest extent, possible self-sustaining, and 4) find opportunities throughout this scope to create templates or materials that can be used for future work on other parcels of land.

Ms. Kessler moved onto section "I" which outlines the different types of maps that would be deliverables in addition to the work plan. She suggested numbers 3 and 4 could be consolidated. No Commission comments were offered.

Ms. Kessler noted the section "J" relates to the collection of data produced in a form compatible with our GIS for future use.

Moving onto section "K" Ms. Kessler noted the Commission has not really talked about how this project would be managed. She suggested this could be discussed once a consultant is brought on. Continuing Ms. Kessler explained this makes it clear there is some meeting time they would need to account for.

Ms. Kessler addressed the last section "L. Community Engagement" noting the Commission has agreed this will be a critical component of this work. Ms. Kessler suggested more thought was needed here regarding what exactly the Commission wants the consultant to do. The following is a list of suggestions/comments by Ms. Kessler and Commission members.

1. An enhanced or a few versions of the walk at the Airport.
2. A PowerPoint presentation to give the broad picture and then a walk through.
3. Select a consultant and then perhaps reach out for volunteers to cover the public presentations such as the Cooperative Extension and the Audubon Society.
4. As this will be driven by the Inventory results there could be several workshops.

Ms. Kessler reported the RFQ that went out did not talk about a public meeting or walking tour.

5. In comparison to the Airport this is a Planning document and should have an action item, perhaps having one educational session. This is not an implementation plan.

6. Will the same conversations happen as those at the Airport from the abutters/users?
7. Ensure the consultant is provided the National Mountain Bike Association data.
8. Is one type of public outreach going to be enough?

Ms. Kessler noted the contract can be negotiated once a consultant is selected. She explained with an RFQ money is off the table and you are looking at what you want to get done.

9. Perhaps we just need to say public outreach is required and then let the consultant convince us why it is or is not needed.

In terms of level, Ms. Kessler suggested the Commission put it in there; at least as far as the qualifications the Commission is looking for. This way the applicants know this is something they should be thinking about when they respond.

Pointing out how the conversation has evolved Mr. Lacey noted it was the public had to be consulted first. Now we are saying let's collect the data first so we can be accurate and be able to tell the public what we are doing. He continued with we should keep in mind the consultant selected may be doing a lot of communicating.

10. Having the consultant know that a public face may be required upfront is an important piece of the qualifications the Commission is looking for.

As the discussion concluded Chair Haynes recommended any additional input be sent to Ms. Kessler who will prepare a final draft for the next meeting. Ms. Kessler noted she would try to be in contact with others such as Andy Bohannon before the next meeting.

5) Conservation Master Plan –
a) Commission Retreat-

Chair Haynes suggested getting through the Goose Pond project before moving onto the Conservation Master Plan and possibly a retreat.

6) 2017 Meeting Schedule – (Page 17 of 17 in the packet)

Ms. Kessler noted a correction to the schedule that needs to be made; in the gray box change Wednesday to Monday.

Councilor Manwaring made a motion to approve the 2017 Meeting Schedule as edited. Councilor Hansel seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Ms. Kessler pointed out due to holidays there are two meetings that will be held on Tuesdays instead of the normally scheduled Mondays.

7) New or Other Business -

1. Mr. Lacey commented on the Commission's discussion regarding the Goose Pond project noting he feels the Commission really gets it. He suggested the Commission keep in mind other parcels when interviewing for a consultant.

2. Chair Haynes thanked Mr. Lacey for his three years of contributing to the Commission. Chair Haynes also asked Mr. Lacey to consider coming back as an Alternate member. Mr. Lacey indicated he was willing to help out if needed.
3. Commission members agreed to add election of new Officers to the next meeting agenda. Ms. Butler noted her willingness to serve as Vice-Chair.

8) Staff Updates

1. Ms. Kessler reported on Mr. Lacey's presentation to the PLD Committee on the Surface Water Protection Ordinance. She noted the PLD Committee recommended these amendments be considered with the Land Use Code Update. Ms. Kessler advised this project is in Phase II which is the rewrite of the Land Use Codes. Ms. Kessler noted the motion made by the PLD Committee.

Councilor Chadbourne made the following motion which was seconded by Chair Richards.

On a vote of 5-0, the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee moves to accept this as informational and for the minutes to be forwarded onto the land use code update.

Mr. Lacey requested to be kept in the loop on the issue.

9) Adjournment – Next Meeting December 19, 2016

There being no further business, Chair Haynes adjourned the meeting at 5:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Mary Lou Sheats-Hall, Minute Taker
December 21, 2016