

# TOWN OF FITZWILLIAM

## CONSERVATION COMMISSION

### MINUTES

**Monday, February 10, 2020**  
**7:00 PM**

**Members Present:** Paul Kotila, Hiel Lindquist, Beth Vanney, Kevin Wooley

**Members Absent:** Cheryl Norskey, Susan Silverman, Dorothy Zug

Mr. Kotila called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

#### **PRIMARY:**

#### **Approval of Meeting Minutes: December 16, 2019**

Mr. Lindquist asked if Mr. Kotila discussed Matt Buonomano and first right of refusal for the Schupack easement property. Mr. Kotila confirmed this was done in January. Mr. Lindquist motioned to approve the minutes. Kotila seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **Approval of Meeting Minutes: January 13, 2020**

Mr. Lindquist corrected his stated question [Correspondence: NHDES Map 10, Lot 45] to read:  
*Mr. Lindquist asked what would happen if the town does not sign the PILOT. Mr. Kotila explained that the PILOT provides predictability to the town.*

Mr. Lindquist corrected line about Monadnock Advisory Committee update to read:  
*...Trail guides were staged at various places to provide background about the park and answer any questions.*

Ms. Vanney motioned to approve as corrected. Mr. Lindquist seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

**Approved the reimbursement to Hiel Lindquist** in the amount of \$46.82 for the purchase of dog waste bags. Mr. Wooley motioned to approve the reimbursement. Ms. Vanney seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

#### **Update - WPOD – on annual town meeting warrant**

Mr. Kotila confirmed that the WPOD is an official warrant item. Mr. Lindquist asked if the Planning Board is planning on adding anything on this topic to the newsletter. LUC was asked to follow up with the Planning Board Chair.

#### **House Bill 1124 – Prime Wetland bill**

Mr. Kotila gave background on the history of this bill. These changes have been overwhelmingly passed by the state legislature, but the governor vetoed it. The legislature never tried to overrule

the veto and is trying again. Mr. Kotila questioned the final line. [*For the purposes of this paragraph existing state highway rights-of-way, including associated permanent easements, shall not include prime wetlands or their adjacent buffers.*] Mr. Wooley commented that in the past, this phrase was included to appease NHDOT. Ms. Vanney would like the town attorney to look into the meaning and effect of this to the town. Mr. Kotila will look into this.

### **Correspondence: E-mail from Matt Buonomano**

The board discussed the letter received from Mr. Buonomano in regards to his property (the Schupack easement). Mr. Kotila requested that the LUC ask the BoS if the submitted letter is sufficient to cover first right of refusal. Mr. Kotila will also ask Mr. Buonomano to resubmit the letter with the date included. Mr. Lindquist brought up the need for an appraisal and that the town cannot go to the Annual Town meeting without the facts in hand. Mr. Kotila gave background and relayed the high cost for an appraisal (\$2600), due to the land containing a conservation easement. Mr. Lindquist said that an appraisal must be done by a qualified appraiser. Mr. Wooley asked which budget the cost of the land purchase would come from. Mr. Kotila was unsure. The Conservation Commission budget was large enough to cover the cost, but it would wipe out those funds. He suggested it could come from a combination of conservation and town funding. Mr. Kotila asked the LUC to inquire with the BoS if he should meet with them again to discuss this project and to follow up with the BoS on if the town is required to obtain an appraisal.

### **NHACC priorities and contact information**

Mr. Kotila discussed the email sent to members by NHACC in regards to priority items. Ms. Vanney felt that the entire board should complete the survey as it is open to the public. The board felt the priority items in town are:

- Invasive species
- Water quality (radon)
- Conserving open spaces
- Wildlife diversity

Mr. Lindquist confirmed that the forests are changing. Animals are dying off, while new animals are expanding their ranges, including invasive species.

### **ON-GOING BUSINESS:**

**Budget Report:** Expenses (including payroll) as of February 7, 2020

**Initiatives - Invasive Bittersweet:** Ms. Vanney updated board about call with Cheshire County Extension in regards to grants. They currently have only three grants, but next year they may be able to do more. It costs approximately \$85/hr to clear a property, while a typical yard takes an entire day. The Schaffer Schoolhouse property was brought up. Mr. Kotila commented that if the Conservation Commission pursues a grant for a project, it should be for something worthwhile.

**Meadowood Task Force Update:** Mr. Kotila updated the board that the Planning Board chairman does not feel the Conservation Commission needs to be involved at this point. The stage 1 brownfield site survey is occurring now.

**Solar Array Proposal – Chinook (NextEra):** Mr. Kotila updated the board on project. The town is still working on the MOU and PILOT. The next SEC public hearing will be on February 20 from 6-9pm. Mr. Lindquist asked for an update on the first SEC hearing. Mr. Wooley mentioned that a Milford citizen asked the panel why a solar farm was needed and why panels are not installed on

roofs. Mr. Kotila added that the abutters have the biggest concerns, especially in regards to noise. Ms. Vanney mentioned that current plan is different from the initial plan submitted in July. One wildlife corridor has been eliminated, but it might be able to be added if layout is moved by a foot or two. Ms. Vanney discussed the 6” gap between the ground and the bottom of the array fencing.

Ms. Vanney updated the board on call with Fish & Game. They confirmed turtle migration will not be affected this year as construction will be after they wake up. However, next year will be an issue. Fish & Game also confirmed that they can come and get turtles trapped in construction site. They will review the National Heritage Bureau reports (endangered plants and animals) to see if there are any issues. Mr. Kotila added that people are aware of the issues, including the Counsel for the Public and the town’s expert [Rick van de Poll]. Mr. Kotila confirmed that the Counsel for the Public is hiring an ecological consultant, but the expensive economic analysis has not been done. Mr. Lindquist questioned who will maintain the growth under the panels. Ms. Vanney confirmed that Chinook will plant species that would not grow that high. Mr. Lindquist questioned that since even low-growing plants need maintenance.

### **Trails Updates & Design:**

Katie Metzger Forest: Mr. Lindquist relayed that a trail can be created in 1-2 days if there are enough volunteers and is less than a mile in length. He suggested adding this item to the newsletter. Mr. Kotila volunteered to draft the newsletter item, while Ms. Vanney volunteered to post to the Fitzwilliam Community Facebook page.

Widow Gage Trail: Mr. Lindquist commented that there are trees down and work needing to be done. He suggested hiring Rick van de Poll for one day to provide training for volunteers during the Earth Day week.

Ms. Vanney updated the board that the autumn olive shrub at the Town Hall will need to be removed, despite previous efforts to save it.

Mr. Lindquist volunteered to contact the trail guide map graphic designer (Connie Porter) for costs on updating the trail maps.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:12pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Nolan  
Land Use Coordinator

**Minutes approved on May 18, 2020**