

TOWN OF FITZWILLIAM

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

MINUTES

Monday, May 17, 2021
7:00 PM

Note: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Conservation Commission met remotely via phone/video conferencing, as allowed under NH Executive Order 2020-04, Emergency Order #12.

Members Present: Paul Kotila, Chairman; Hiel Lindquist; Kevin Woolley; Susan Silverman; Beth Vanney; Terri Robbitts; and Robyn Bates, Selectmen's Representative.

Members Absent:

Guests Present:

Chairman Paul Kotila called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

REVIEW OF DRAFT MINUTES: April 19, 2021.

After a brief discussion and three minor edits, **Terri Robbitts motioned to approve the minutes of April 19, 2021 as corrected. Susan Silverman seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**

Yes: 6 [Kotila; Lindquist; Woolley; Silverman; Vanney; Robbitts]; No: 0; Abstained: 0

OLD BUSINESS:

Eversource Driveway: Robyn Bates updated the Commission stating that the DPW Director, Glenn Smith, and Paul Kotila met with Eversource and NHDOT. The Town signed off on the driveway access with conditions. However, the State issued the driveway permit without any conditions. The Town Administrator has been in contact with the State to have the Conservation Commission's conditions added. However, Ms. Bates has not seen the formal paperwork yet. Mr. Kotila felt Eversource has gone around the tree line, as asked. Ms. Silverman asked if there were conditions put in place in regards to the removal of plants. Mr. Kotila explained that the driveway access is just temporary but there were no conditions in regards to vegetation. But the proposed access area is the most direct way to access the power lines. The alternative location on the other end is much wetter and would require a bridge. There was not much of an alternative solution as there is very little upland area.

UPDATES TO ON-GOING BUSINESS:

Natural Resource Inventory update: Ms. Silverman updated the Commission stating that she has spoken with Dr. Rick Van de Poll. He is currently very busy with a project in Rindge. However, Dr. Van de Poll indicated that Fitzwilliam is his next project. He did not give Ms. Silverman any timeline though. The LUC was asked to follow-up with him again to confirm the prime wetland mapping.

Prime Wetland Final Report: Ms. Silverman asked if the Commission could consider printing additional copies of the prime wetland final report. Only three reports were printed but several Land Use board members have requested a copy. The LUC was asked to poll the Land Use Board to find the needed quantities and then obtain printing quotes.

Rail Trail project: Kevin Woolley relayed to the Commission that not much has occurred since the last meeting. Mike Kowalczyk will give a presentation on May 25. Mr. Woolley attended a trail clean-up in Swanzey, where he met people from Monadnock Happy Trails. This horse group has offered to help with the cleaning up of the Fitzwilliam trails. Mr. Kotila commented that the area between Royalston Road and

Templeton Turnpike is mainly in good shape. There are some ATV tracks though. Mr. Woolley stated that the Sip Pond area is heavily rutted from ATVs. Beth Vanney stated the same for the area by her house. Hiel Lindquist also concurred stating there is an active ATV trail by Collins Pond. Riders have almost a speedway right into the trail. Mr. Woolley stated the Rail Trail is state property and ATV use is not allowed. He is hoping this project will help resolve this issue. Mr. Kotila stated the next SWRPC meeting will occur in June.

Beaver activity: Ms. Vanney stated that the beaver dam by her house on Collins Pond by the bridge near Templeton Turnpike and the bridge is existing. She has not been able to verify any new activity. There does not seem to be any cutting by the road or anything persistent.

Budget: no discussion held as the budget is in line.

Judy Harris: The LUC stated that she was able to connect Ms. Harris with Rolf/Barbara Briggs. The Briggs will share their stormwater management and vegetation plans with Ms. Harris. Mr. Kotila stated the tax map does not match the survey. The LUC explained that the survey on file is old and some structures have been removed. Ms. Silverman still had concerns that Avitar reclassified the structure from an accessory structure to a dwelling. However, she acknowledged it is not a topic within the Commission's purview. The LUC was asked to schedule a site walk with Ms. Harris.

Chinook Solar Project: Ms. Bates stated there is no update. Chinook petitioned the state to waive some of the requirements in regards to the National Grid substation, but all waivers/exceptions were denied. Ms. Bates confirmed that no construction has started.

Trails: Mr. Lindquist stated he ran into Lew Shelley. Mr. Shelley indicated that it would not take much effort to get the trail in place in the Katie Metzger Forest and suggested a work day. Mr. Kotila asked if the Commission could organize something with Mr. Shelley without it becoming a huge community event. Mr. Kotila suggested creating a pathway with some signage. He felt there were no major obstacles, but they would need to figure out access and parking at some point down the road. The area has a wide shoulder.

Ms. Vanney asked if there has been any discussion about repairing the bridge in Widow Gage. Mr. Kotila stated that is a separate project, but at least one bridge needs repair. Mr. Lindquist asked what to do about the broken timber in Widow Gage. Ms. Vanney stated there is a down tree between the curved stone wall and the massive stone pile. There are also three timbers out as well. Mr. Woolley suggested a walk to determine the needs.

Mr. Lindquist relayed that he is almost out of the trail maps. It was suggested that photocopies be made of the maps until a permanent solution is found.

Monadnock Advisory: Mr. Lindquist stated the group met but he was unable to attend. The Gap Mountain South trail parking lot is still closed. The trails are open, but the parking lot will be closed until the lot has been fixed. Mr. Lindquist relayed that Monadnock Trail Week will happen this year.

Dog Waste Bins: No discussion was held as the bins are in good shape.

Invasive Species: Ms. Vanney had no update. However, property sites will need to be visited this year. Seed beds can last up to five years. Mr. Kotila stated that he uses Triclopyr (paint on version) and has had good results. Ms. Vanney stated she used Ortho Poison Ivy (paint on version) which uses that same chemical.

Meadowood: Ms. Bates stated the BoS has not heard anything new. Mr. Woolley said he will reach out to Ed for an update.

Tree Cutting Violations: The LUC was asked to follow-up with NHDES in regards to the White and Jonas Damon tree cutting violations.

Ms. Silverman had concerns about the White property as the property slopes to the lake. Mr. Kotila informed the Commission that Barbara Green sent him the 2020 VLAP report for Laurel Lake. Recent reports have shown that chlorophyll and phosphorus levels are up, but clarity is down. However, this report shows conditions have improved. NHDES has attributed the improved condition was due to the drought, which is most likely a temporary condition due to less erosion of the watershed. Ms. Green asked Mr. Kotila about a watershed management program for Laurel Lake. Mr. Kotila suggested looking into the same program that Pearly Pond used, but the program would most likely need to be done by the people around the lake. Ms. Silverman stated that the Laurel Lake Association could be a good start and they have their board meeting the beginning part of June. She also felt there is an educational piece to this, especially in regards to tree cutting. She felt the west side of the lake, due to the lack of development and vegetation, is keeping the lake in check. She suggested inviting Ms. Green to the next Commission meeting. Mr. Kotila will follow up with Ms. Green.

Ms. Vanney asked if there is any solution to the runoff from Brigham Hill Road into the lake. Mr. Kotila stated that is a town issue but those sorts of issues make watershed management plans useful. One must identify sources first. He felt the Pearly Pond program seems to be working well. This could be a collaborative project, especially with lake residents, as private landowners must do things. However, it is a plan and not requirements. Mr. Kotila felt it would be best to build the program one by one, as each watershed is different. Data collection is important. Laurel Lake and Rockwood Pond have the long-term data needed for such a program.

Correspondence: Mr. Kotila told the Commission that he received a phone call from Doug Seiler, who is interested in developing community solar on his property. The LUC explained that Mr. Seiler had a preliminary consultation with the Planning Board. He would like to install solar for community use on his property next to AB Tech, along Route 12 North. Mr. Lindquist commented that Mr. Seiler owns property on both sides of Gap Mountain Road. The house has not been maintained since the 1950s and he speculated that Mr. Seiler is trying to find funding to keep the property. Mr. Woolley commented that the state has raised the mega-watt limit for community power.

Mr. Lindquist asked if there have been any conversations about going back to in-person meetings. The LUC explained that it is being held on a board by board basis, but remote access must be available during the emergency order.

With there being no further business, Ms. Silverman motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Kotila seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Yes: 6 [Kotila; Lindquist; Woolley; Silverman; Vanney; Robbitts]; No: 0; Abstained: 0

The meeting was adjourned at 8:26pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Nolan
Land Use Coordinator

Minutes approved as amended on June 21.