

TOWN OF FITZWILLIAM

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

MINUTES

Monday, November 15, 2021

7:00 PM

Members Present: Paul Kotila, Chairman; Kevin Woolley; Susan Silverman; Beth Vanney; Terri Robbitts; and JEF Craig, Selectmen's Representative.

Members Absent: Hiel Lindquist.

Staff Present: Lori Nolan, Land Use Coordinator (LUC).

Guests Present:

Chairman Paul Kotila called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

REVIEW OF DRAFT MINUTES: October 18, 2021.

After a brief discussion and several minor edits, **Beth Vanney motioned to approve the minutes of October 18, 2021 as amended. Terri Robbitts seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**

Yes: 5 [Kotila; Woolley; Silverman; Vanney; Robbitts]; No: 0; Abstained: 0

OLD BUSINESS

Natural Resource Inventory: Mr. Kotila stated he contacted Dr. Rick Van de Poll last Friday. Dr. Van de Poll asked some follow up questions and he promised to submit a revised proposal. However, Mr. Kotila has not heard back from Dr. Van de Poll yet. Mr. Kotila would like to keep the appointment with the Planning Board though. JEF Craig handed out information detailing how much money is in the two Conservation Commission's accounts. Mr. Kotila envisions using the Capital Reserve/Current Use fund to pay for the NRI, as the CIP/Savings Account is to be used only for land purchases. However, Mr. Kotila emphasized that no decisions have been made yet.

Mr. Craig commented that ARPA funds allow for environmental mitigation. He will look into what exactly that involves. Susan Silverman added that we are experiencing bigger rain events with more flooding. Mr. Craig told the Commission that the BoS has a culvert and road stream crossing inventory. It was done by South West Region Planning Commission in 2017. Mr. Kotila felt that Aquatic Resource Mitigation (ARM) funds can be used for stream control, but not for flood control.

Ms. Vanney felt that a section on contamination was missing from the NRI. She felt it should have its own section. Mr. Kotila thought it was included and remembered discussing it with Dr. Van de Poll. It is typically part of the water resource section. It is important to identify which areas of information we do not have and any remedies. Ms. Vanney felt that contamination could be part of ARM.

Mr. Kotila felt that it still made sense to split the project over two years, but not because of budgetary reasons. He envisioned phase 1 to include compilation, while phase 2 would be analysis. Ms. Robbitts asked if funding could be obtained through the Planning Board. Mr. Kotila felt it is possible.

UPDATES TO ON-GOING BUSINESS:

Chinook Solar Project: no update

Stone Pond Dam Removal: The LUC updated the Commission stating the attorney representing the property owner has set up an information meeting. Mr. Kotila asked if this meeting is just introducing the project or presenting options. The LUC would find out.

Katie Metzger Forest: Mr. Kotila stated there was a work day on October 29. They were able to clear the brush on the west route. They also remarked the trails, but real markers are still needed.

Monadnock Conservancy: Mr. Kotila stated that the Conservancy and the SnoMoles have received funding to make the Sip Pond Rail Trail handicap accessible. It was his impression that work would start soon, but he did not have a date.

Widow Gage: Mr. Kotila asked if there was any word on the squatter. The LUC stated that she sent the complaint to the police but had not heard anything more. She would follow-up.

Schupack Easement: Mr. Kotila asked if the Purchase and Sales agreement had been signed by the BoS yet. Mr. Craig was unsure but he will ask at their meeting on Wednesday. Mr. Kotila stated that once the agreement is signed, then the Town must do a title search. It was his understanding that Mr. Buonomano wanted to execute the deal in 2021, but the agreement reflects 2022.

Dog Waste: No update.

Meadowood: Mr. Craig stated the Task Force has been disbanded as they have completed their work. The Health Officer has been assigned as the liaison. There has been talk of a property transfer to a not-for-profit to allow DES to provide funding, but no decisions have been made. The LUC commented that the summary report is available on the town's home page.

ARPA Funds: Mr. Kotila commented that there is a need to improve meeting technology for presentations designed for the room size. Ms. Silverman felt that acoustics are an issue as well and that it appears other towns were more prepared. The current system is not effective in both the small meeting room and the BoS office. The BoS office is very small and not accessible for guests. Meetings need to be more accessible for the public; more open rather than opaque. Addressing the hard surfaces, like adding curtains, can help soften the acoustics. Ms. Vanney commented that microphones help. But people need to speak loudly and clearly while also identifying themselves.

Budget: Mr. Kotila commented that he had a copy of the proposed budget. The Commission will keep the same level of funding for mileage/travel and \$10,000 for CIP. There were no dramatic changes. Ms. Vanney noted there were no funds for the NRI. Mr. Kotila stated that that will not be paid for out of the operating budget, but some associated costs were included like printing.

Mitigation List for ARM funds: The Commission reviewed information provided by Mr. Lindquist. Mr. Kotila commented that the Commission needs to identify specifics that could fit into this, perhaps a culvert survey. Adding culverts would allow the movement of water and aquatic life between wetlands. Ms. Vanney commented about the area on Templeton Turnpike by the Stone Pond Dam. That is an opportunity to link the wetlands with a culvert and also remove the buckthorn. She also thought perhaps addressing the state of Sip Pond and how it is filling in. Mr. Kotila did not feel that was a good candidate project as what is occurring is a natural process. Most of the shoreland is undeveloped and there is so much organic matter on the shoreland. Sip Pond is slowly turning into a marsh, bog, or fen. Ms. Silverman suggested projects to protect aquifers and drinking water. It is hard to see into the future but perhaps look at a town septic system. It is not a problem now because the density has not increased. Mr. Kotila felt that we would need to identify how a sewer system affects wildlife or water. Ms. Vanney commented that there is a contamination area identified in the middle of the town's biggest aquifer. Mr. Kotila thought that area had been completely mitigated. It may be the old mill site at the dam, which has been removed. Mr. Kotila asked the Commission to review the Keene model and provide any ideas. The ARM funds are used to mitigate damaged aquatic resources in the region and protection of water in the broadest sense.

Invasive: Ms. Vanney stated that it appears there is purple loosestrife in the ditch in the area of Route 119, Jaffrey Road, and Mr. Mike's. She asked if invasives can be worked on in the right-of-way area on a state road. Ms. Robbitts commented that knotweed was cut by town mowers along Jaffrey Road by the trailer park. There was a safety aspect to it as the knotweed extended over into the road. Knotweed can easily be spread by mowing. Mr. Craig will follow up on this topic.

With there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:24 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Nolan
Land Use Coordinator

Minutes approved as amended on December 20, 2021.