

TOWN OF FITZWILLIAM

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

MINUTES

Monday, December 21, 2020
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, Kevin Woolley, Hiel Lindquist, Susan Silverman, Beth Vanney, and Terri Robbitts

Members Absent:

Guests Present:

Chairman Paul Kotila called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

PRIMARY:

Prime Wetlands:

Susan Silverman discussed including an article in the newsletter for January. She suggested having a follow-up article with different items for the February and March newsletter as well. Terri Robbitts stated the newsletter will go out next Tuesday in the mail.

Ms. Silverman suggested Ms. Robbitts post a message to Facebook, possibly as an event. She would prefer questions be directed to the public hearing. Mr. Kotila stated that Conservation does not have any presence on Facebook. He asked if the information is on the Town's website. The LUC explained what is available online currently. The group agreed to post to Facebook directing people to the Town's website and to the public hearing. They also agreed that Facebook is not a forum for discussion. Ms. Silverman felt it is important to list links in the Facebook post.

Mr. Kotila asked if the Conservation Commission should meet outside of the January 18 meeting, which will be the second of the required public hearings for Prime Wetlands and is scheduled to last two hours. He felt there were no critical items to discuss. He suggested playing the schedule by ear, and the group could perhaps meet 30 minutes earlier.

Beth Vanney asked about any feedback from the Raciti site walk. Ms. Silverman stated the case is before ZBA now. She also felt, without going into details, the process is a little messed up.

Mr. Kotila asked about the Wood case. Ms. Silverman stated they have installed a temporary shed in their parking area using tarps. Ms. Vanney questioned if the State should be involved. Ms. Silverman agreed and felt the state must sign off on that project. The LUC will notify the ZBA and the BoS about informing the state.

At this time, Ms. Silverman left the meeting.

Shoreland Protection Overlay District (SPOD) ordinance

Mr. Kotila updated the Commission stating that he and Ms. Vanney have been attending the working sessions with Planning Board and felt current draft ordinance is too complicated and confusing. The

Planning Board is in the process of talking to Dr. Rick van de Poll to see what the Wetlands Protection Overlay District (WPOD) and the SPOD ordinances have in common. It must be clear enough for the Town to understand and also explainable to an applicant. Mr. Kotila is not confident either can happen now. He is supportive of Dr. van de Poll's involvement to do the analysis and advise us. However, the cost of Dr. van de Poll has not been realized yet. Ms. Vanney felt the document is currently unworkable. She commented that the Planning Board felt there are holes and gaps in the WPOD. She felt this is a good opportunity to fill these holes.

Mr. Kotila explained that the WPOD does not adequately protect shoreland as uplands go right to the shores. The shore area is different from wetlands. So the question is how to best handle this. Ms. Vanney commented that according to RSA 483:B9, vegetation and landscaping should be included, as it is currently missing from regulations. There must be a water cleaning element. She also felt the group must decide how far away the primary structure set-back should be.

Mr. Kotila felt this most likely will not be ready in time for the 2021 town meeting. Delays are not the best, but this could be a better workable plan with new Prime Wetlands already on the ballot.

Natural Resource Inventory Review:

Hiel Lindquist suggested a working session to get the review underway. Ms. Vanney suggested including the Planning Board and the first meeting should not be about wordsmithing. She would like to show how the inventory changed over time and how gaps can be shored up.

Mr. Kotila suggested meeting on January 11 at 7:00pm to get the review underway. The group agreed and the working session was scheduled.

Rail Trail

Kevin Woolley updated the group on the Rail Trail discussion. SWPRC approached each town for input with the goal to improve the trail system from the Massachusetts border to Keene. They have a questionnaire and mapping to submit input. There is a small working group made up of Hiel Lindquist, Paul Kotila, Robyn Bates (BoS), Sheena Royce (Recreation), and himself. They are scheduled to meet on December 30. There is an article in the newsletter asking for town's people for input. Ms. Vanney felt getting onto the trails safely is an issue, either from the parking lot or with kids on bikes. Mr. Woolley stated they discussed crossings on state roads already. Mr. Kotila stated that SWPRC is in the process of collecting input from town for how trails are used and for modification and access to the trails. Their intent is to create a Rail Trail Planning document. They must find what the needs are and then figure out how to solve the issues.

Approval of Meeting Minutes: November 16, 2020

After a brief discussion of minor edits, **Ms. Vanney motioned to approve the minutes as corrected. Mr. Lindquist seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**

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

Budget

The LUC explained that there were not many expenses this year. The cost for the Prime Wetlands will come from the Change in Use fund.

Schupack Appraisal:

Mr. Kotila updated the Commission stating he approached the original appraiser for an updated quote. He has not heard back from them yet. The BoS approved the charges, which will come from Conservation funds. This will not be for the 2021 ATM.

Chinook Solar Array

Mr. Kotila sent out the final documents, including the MOU, to the Commission. The project application has been approved by the State. DES stated that the conservation easement purpose is for wildlife protection. Mr. Lindquist asked about the status of the PILOT. The LUC will find out. Mr. Kotila stated

there have already been driveway cut-ins off Route 119 installed. The LUC explained those driveway cut-ins are from a recently approved subdivision and not from the Chinook project.

Trails

Mr. Lindquist stated that the Blue trail looks good in Widow Gage.

Katie Metzger

Mr. Kotila relayed that Lew Shelley is still interested in helping put the trails in place.

Monadnock Advisory Committee

Mr. Lindquist stated that the Committee met on December 17 through Zoom. There is a logging operation underway off Old Toll Road, but that should not affect the parking lot. Park reservations are still required and this might be the new norm due to overuse of the mountain. They also want to address remote parking lots.

Mr. Lindquist also stated that the logging operation on Gap Mountain South Trail is still on-going all winter. The North Parking lot is closed for winter but the trails are still open. Park bathrooms have been winterized and reservations are still needed but it will guarantee you a parking spot.

Their next meeting is scheduled for April 8.

Dog Waste

Mr. Lindquist stated there have been hardly any use since the virus hit. Mr. Kotila thought it was odd as he sees a lot of dogs now on the trails.

Invasive Species

Ms. Vanney explained that on December 15, the emerald ash borer federal quarantine has ended. The quarantine gave the ability to seize things like firewood that may have been improperly imported to different states. She also relayed to the Commission that UNH Co-Op Extension Natural Resources is offering an Invasive Academy. It is 6 weeks long and has a cost of \$35. Mr. Kotila stated that the cost of attending can be paid for with Conservation funds for professional development. Anyone interested in attending should contact the Town Administrator to have their costs paid for by the Town.

Meadowood

The LUC explained that the Task Force has received the report from the water testing. Mr. Kotila asked if the Task Force could provide the report or give the Commission a status update.

With there being no further business, **Mr. Kotila motioned to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Vanney seconded. Motion passed unanimously.** The meeting was adjourned at 8:11pm.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Nolan
Land Use Coordinator

Minutes approved as written on February 22, 2021.