

Strafford Conservation Commission
Minutes
January 4, 2009

Present:

Liz Evans
Harmony Anderson
Cal Schroeder
Carolyn Page
Jack Bronnenberg
Al Pratt
Bruce Smith
Dave Perkins

Guests:

Scott Young
Phil Auger
Charlie Moreno

Opening and Introductions

New arrival: Al Pratt is the proud father of Elias born December 21. Pictures were circulated.

Approval of minutes: The meeting was opened at 7:05 pm. A motion was made by Al and seconded by Jack to accept the December, 2008 **minutes**. Approved.

Any guests interested in becoming members of the Commission? Scott Young said he was interested.

Financial update: There has been a change in the total because of bills paid, but the amount was not available.

Guest Presentations

DES application The City of Rochester wants to install a 24 inch gate valve at the Berry River dam site on an existing 24 inch water main. They will be disrupting about 600 square feet of land. This is a Permit by Notification. Approved by consensus.

Permission was asked for siting of a road that will go to two lots being split off from a farm. One lot already has a house on it and one house is to be built. To preserve the existing field, the road to the new building will have to cross a wet area. A proposed 12 inch culvert will be installed. The Commissioners wondered why a 12 inch culvert is proposed when 15 inches is the standard. The positioning of the road was approved by consensus.

Liz had a complaint about logging. The state was called and a number of violations were cited including no intent to cut permit and illegal wetlands crossings. Jack went on to explain RSA227 that

governs timber harvesting. He said that ultimately the land owner is responsible to make sure the laws are followed and the logger is using Best Management Practices.

Phil Auger: New Easement proposal - Phil presented a new conservation easement. This will be a donation of about 47 acres with 2200 feet of frontage on the Berry River and 600 feet of frontage on Crown Point Road. One parcel of the land is in Rochester. Phil will ask the Rochester commission about helping to fund the transaction costs. This property is home to some endangered Blanding's turtles and it is presently a tree farm. Phil will set up a date for a walk of the property.

Roberts Road building permit application – New property owners on Roberts Road want permission to build. It is our understanding that the entire Roberts Road is “discontinued” or “abandoned” since about 1900. This is a different distinction from a “class 6” road. There is no public right of way. The school property lines show that the land over which the road used to be is in a conservation easement and belongs to the school. Approval of the request would set a very bad precedent. There will be a Zoning Board of Adjustment meeting on Monday, January 12 at 7:00 to discuss this. Phil suggested that we be there with a rational unified voice. He and Dan Kern will send out the available information.

SB381 Warrant Article - Phil tried to explain SB381. Part one authorizes towns to contribute conservation funds to projects sponsored by groups such as Bear-Paw or the Forest Society without having to hold legal interest in the property. The second allows towns to use funds to purchase property outside the town boundaries. If the first one is not approved by the town, the town will have to have executory interest in every piece of conservation property. If the second is not passed, we will not be able to use funds in cases where a resident's property straddles the town line. The articles have to be worded exactly as they are written by the state. Liz will bring the articles before the selectmen and will arrange a meeting if they want to talk to us.

Charlie Moreno: Harvest – The current timber harvest is about two thirds complete. Charlie led a walk of the logged area in December with Jack, Harmony, Dave and Carolyn. All were impressed with the careful work that is being done by Ed Cutter.

Woods Road – Charlie presented the road plan drawn up by Strafford County / UNH Extension Forester, Deborah Goard. He said it will be a good quality road allowing access to the forest. It is designed to blend into the forest in a few years. The site of the landing had to be moved to the corner where the Weidman and Edgerly lots meet because of pogonias being present at the original proposed site. Charlie will put together a detailed design that will be put out for bid to town contractors. A list of qualified contractor names was suggested to Charlie. This should be completed by this spring so work can start as soon as possible. There are two grants to cover the costs of these projects. There is a National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) grant for the road including construction of a bridge and one to develop the landing. Charlie will have to get a wetlands permit for this work. Phil Auger and Deb Goard will help.

The Conservation Commission will need a new warrant article to set up a management account enabling us to use timber sale profits for management of the properties. Phil has examples of these.

Timber Stand Improvement – Charlie wants two to three acres of young pines and hardwoods thinned out. The area is too small to put out to bid. We will have Ed do this chainsaw work when it is too wet to be in the woods with heavy equipment. Charlie will mark the trees.

Invasive Plants – We have some invasives, including oriental bittersweet, in the field area at the entrance to the forest. We need to take care of them before they spread. Charlie thinks some can be pulled, others may need more attention. We talked about using volunteers to help with this – Eagle Scout hopefuls or students from the environment studies programs at Coe-Brown. Harmony will call the teachers, Sarah Ward and Winnie Young. These students will need to be trained. Charlie thinks there may be a grant for part of this. The NRCS will inspect the work done with their grant money.

Pogonia Study – Charlie brought with him the printed and bound results of the pogonia study. Every plant is marked and has a GPS reading. Each location has a description and photograph of the habitat conditions. The Weidman Lot is done and the Edgerly Lot is about half completed. This had a grant from the Natural Heritage Bureau.

Other Thank you, Charlie, for all these grants that you have gotten that are allowing us to do the excellent work that is happening in our town forest!

Old Business

Conservation award progress – Al was otherwise occupied, but will do the needed maps.

Stewardship plans for Isinglass River Conservation Reserve (IRCR) – As noted last month, no grants are available to us at this time. We need to establish a management account (mentioned previously) to fund the needed planning and work on this new property.

New Business

Additional conservation information for website – Eventually we can have the information about and new maps of the town forests on the site. (An afterthought from Carolyn – It might be nice to have a whole section on the town forests with updates on projects, etc.)

Other - Harmony will write the annual report by next week. The deadline for Warrant Articles is February 3.

Standing Committee Reports

Land Protection Group – none

Managed Growth Group – still trying to get together

Water Quality Group – none

Summary/Adjournment

Next meeting date: Monday, February 2

7:00 pm. Town Hall

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Enz Page