

ADOPTED

City of Keene
New Hampshire

CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Monday, March 21, 2016 4:30 PM 2nd Floor Conference Room, City Hall

Members Present:

Chair Thomas P. Haynes
Tad Lacey
Brian Reilly
Councilor George Hansel (Departed at 5:45 PM)
Councilor Janis Manwaring

Staff Present:

Tara Kessler, Planner

Members Not Present:

Sadie Butler
Denise Burchsted

1. Call to order

Chair Haynes called the meeting to order at 4:33 PM.

2. Minutes – February 16, 2016

Councilor Manwaring made a motion to accept the minutes of February, 16, 2016. Mr. Lacey seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

3. Notifications

a) Keene SnoRiders Club, Inc. – Wetlands Minimum Impact Trails Notification

Chair Haynes noted that this item is a notification but questioned the exact location. Ms. Kessler did not have the information readily available but noted the information is included in the meeting packet.

**b) Eversource Energy 76W5 and L76W5 Distribution Line - VHB
Response to NHDES Request for More Information**

Chair Haynes noted that this response was in reference to the Friends of Open Space's letter as well as the Commission's requests. Ms. Kessler stated that Eversource was required to respond to all comments received. Ms. Kessler noted that in response to the Conservation Commission's

concerns about pole height, Eversource has noted that some poles will be higher than the specified 45'. The poles that will exceed this height are those that will support the powerlines crossing Route 12.

4. Conservation Master Plan Report

Chair Haynes stated that tasks were assigned for each group during the last meeting. Chair Haynes handed out documents in reference to various definitions on greenways and wildlife corridors. He continued, noting that most of the definitions are very similar and asked the Commission to go through them and determine an appropriate one. Chair Haynes stated that he created a new definition from other versions: "A planned corridor or a network of land that are designed and managed for multiple purposes, including ecological, recreational, cultural, aesthetic, or other purposes compatible with the city's conservation plan." He noted that Ms. Butler also provided separate definitions for corridors.

Mr. Hansel noted that the wildlife corridors seem to be more location specific and that greenways have a more generalized definition that considers human interaction. Mr. Reilly noted that there is a distinction between human and wildlife corridors. Chair Haynes asked if there should be two definitions. The Commission agreed with this suggestion. Chair Haynes noted that Ms. Butler's definitions may be more appropriate in this case. Mr. Reilly asked whether the corridors are destinations or are considered as ways to get to destinations. Mr. Hansel stated that he interprets them as being a connection between two habitats and the key is to create a corridor that wildlife would use. He noted that through his research the topic seemed to be very complicated and suggested using motion-activated wildlife cameras as a way to observe animal usage of corridor areas.

Chair Haynes stated that he and Ms. Butler will get together and create two different corridor definitions, one for humans and one for wildlife. Ms. Kessler suggested identifying specific areas for application and noted that she can help with maps if necessary.

Mr. Hansel discussed the work of the wildlife working group and noted that their task was to review the state Wildlife Action Plan and relate it to the local plan. Mr. Hansel stated that Chapter 2 of the state Plan, "New Hampshire Habitats and Risks" and Chapter 4 "Identified and Prioritized Threats to New Hampshire Wildlife" were most relevant. He noted that Chapter 2 identified lowland spruce forests, warm water rivers and streams and vernal pools as being at risk habitats. Mr. Hansel stated that pollution followed by climate change, natural system modifications, invasive species and commercial development were identified as risk factors that impact wildlife as well. Councilor Manwaring stated that this information can be combined with her documentation on habitat. She gave the example of Beech Hill and noted that it has a known wildlife corridor. Councilor Manwaring questioned the range to which the Commission should review wildlife corridors. Chair Haynes noted that this detail is for the Commission to determine.

Mr. Hansel noted that the Wildlife Action Plan is a good reference to determine priorities. Chair Haynes noted that the state likely has maps as well. Mr. Reilly handed out habitat maps he obtained from the state's Wildlife Action Plan.

Mr. Hansel stated that his group will review resources, including the maps provided by Mr. Reilly, and will determine how local municipalities are addressing wildlife issues. Mr. Reilly noted that there were a variety of maps available online with different levels of details. Mr. Hansel stated that the group will review examples from across the state and choose a plan that is most applicable to Keene.

Mr. Reilly noted that one priority for the NRI group was to gather uniform information on each parcel of land owned by City and to develop a template for an NRI. He continued, stating that this template has not yet been drafted and that aspects to consider are the potential for wildlife and the potential for human recreation. Mr. Reilly stated that potential outcomes or goals of an NRI could include identifying areas for recreational use, timber sales, creation of wildlife habitat, and protection of water bodies. Mr. Lacey noted that that many parcels have had an NRI conducted. He suggested having someone analyze the results and continue with more detailed forestry information. He continued, stating that Beech Hill, Stearn's Hill and Goose Pond have NRI information available. Mr. Reilly noted that the larger parcels have had an NRI done within the last 20 years.

Mr. Lacey noted that Goose Pond has a substantial amount of land and the Commission should determine how the habitats are affected by humans and vice versa. He continued, suggesting a kiosk for Goose Pond to increase interaction with the public. Mr. Hansel stated that a kiosk is a perfect example of an objective for the conservation plan. Councilor Manwaring stated that the NRI for Beech Hill was not very recent and noted that it was conducted in 2000. Mr. Lacey stated that from an ecological point the land has not changed significantly. Councilor Manwaring stated concern about invasive species and asked if this was discussed in the Beech Hill NRI. Mr. Reilly noted that the discussion of invasive species was not a main focus in any NRI. Chair Haynes noted that invasive species may be a completely separate component to the plan.

Mr. Lacey stated that there are several NRI templates available for the Commission to utilize. He suggested surveying land and hiring a professional for forest analysis. Mr. Lacey questioned when to the Commission should focus on the Roxbury Watershed. He noted that this land should be reviewed differently because there is no recreational use.

Mr. Lacey stated that a map with significant detail of the surveyed perimeter of city-owned conservation land for Goose Pond is necessary so that boundaries are not in question if the Commission hires someone to conduct forest inventories. Mr. Lacey noted that a forester who surveys land for timber potential, can also observe invasive species and wildlife habitat conditions. Mr. Hansel asked if two separate people would be hired to conduct the forest analysis and to create the plan. Mr. Lacey noted that an experienced forester can come up with a plan. Mr. Hansel suggested creating a plan by the end of the year with professional help. Mr. Reilly asked if funding is available. Chair Haynes noted that there are funds available. Chair Haynes noted

that the Commission should get as much work done as possible before hiring someone. Mr. Hansel noted that the hiring process will take some time and the Commission should start this.

Councilor Manwaring noted that the Commission is not ready to hire anyone for the plan itself but can hire someone to review timber.

Chair Haynes stated that the Commission should create a list of possible consultants for preparing this plan. Mr. Hansel suggested creating a proposed budget. Mr. Lacey suggested a perimeter survey of conservation easements in Goose Pond. Ms. Kessler stated that she would look into this.

Ms. Kessler stated that it is best for the Commission to narrow down the scope and then consulting firms can be determined. She continued, stating she will create a list of possible consultants. Ms. Kessler stated that the whole process of preparing a scope of work, identifying, and hiring a consultant will take a number of months.

Councilor Manwaring noted that she worked with a group that surveyed land and it costed about \$40,000. Mr. Reilly wondered if this included some of the parcels in discussion. Councilor Manwaring stated that it was a general overview but it could be possible.

Mr. Charles Daloz noted that the increase of agricultural use of the land should be considered as well.

5. Friends of Open Space Event-April 12, 2016

Chair Haynes asked what the Commission will be presenting at the event. Mr. Lacey suggested showcasing a map highlighting easements and city land as well as educating people on what the Commission is working on. Mr. Hansel agreed that maps are successful at events. Mr. Lacey suggested having the state's Wildlife Action Plan on the table. Ms. Kessler stated that the state's 2015 map data is available but all other information is from 2010. Mr. Reilly suggested map measurements: 11x17 or larger.

The Commission assigned tasks:

- Maps-Chair Haynes and Ms. Kessler.
- Brochure (50 copies) including Commission's mission statement, responsibilities and pictures –Mr. Reilly and Councilor Manwaring.

Councilor Manwaring stated that the Commission has room for another alternate. Mr. Hansel stated that this event could help with recruitment. Chair Haynes suggested a clipboard so people can suggest items for the conservation plan.

6. VHB-Report on West Street Dam-Further Discussion and Next Steps

Ms. Kessler provided the Commission with a brief update on this report. She stated that she is waiting to hear back from VHB about creating a inundation map with bank-full. She noted that there might not enough funding available to accomplish this map if the model has to be run again. Ms. Kessler noted that VHB will be addressing errors identified in some of the report's table and revising the color of some charts. Ms. Kessler stated that she is working with VHB and the City to identify a date for a presentation before City Council on the report.

Chair Haynes stated that at some point a recommendation needs to occur and wonders what additional information the Commission needs. Councilor Manwaring stated concern with how much water the project would use for hydropower and wondered if there will be an extreme fluctuation of water. Mr. Reilly noted that the Surry Dam will affect the water level most. Mr. Hansel stated that he assumed there would not be extreme variations of water levels. Chair Haynes stated that it is a question the Commission can ask.

Mr. Lacey stated that he would like to see the bank-full inundation map. Ms. Kessler stated that VHB did not provide a map concerning bank-full within the river and chose to map average annual flow conditions instead. She continued, stating that the average annual flow was chosen because there seemed to be more concern with low flow and this provided a better understanding of these conditions than bankfull conditions would.

Chair Haynes stated that the Nature Conservancy will be attending a future meeting to give an informational presentation on the effects of dam removal generally. Chair Haynes noted that the Nature Conservancy can present as soon as possible.

7. Surface Water Protection Ordinance

Mr. Lacey gave an overview of the proposed changes to the Surface Water Protection Ordinance, which were shared in advance of the meeting. He noted that that they propose to remove the Section on Exemptions. Mr. Lacey stated that it was better to write a new statement that addresses the uses that are not considered to be surface waters. The other proposed amendment is to eliminate the phrase, "in an undisturbed and natural condition," from the definition of buffer.

Mr. Lacey made a motion to accept the Surface Water Subcommittee revisions as presented. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Ms. Kessler stated that the Commission could either consult the Public Works Director and Planning Department staff to receive feedback or it can be presented before City Council who would then give staff authority to prepare the proposed ordinance changes. Chair Haynes suggested receiving staff comments first. The Commission members agreed.

Ms. Kessler stated that the Zoning Administrator, Public Works Director and Planning Department Directors will review this and comments will be presented at the Commission's next meeting.

8. New or Other Business

Chair Haynes stated that he recently went before the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee to give an update on the Conservation Commission's work.

Chair Haynes noted that there is grant money available through the state for conservation; specifically the Conservation License Plate Grant and proposals are due in April. Ms. Kessler noted that the next grant proposal for conservation related project is due in July. Ms. Kessler stated that she will send the website information out via email.

9. Staff Updates

None at this time.

10. Adjournment-Next meeting date-April 18, 2016

Chair Haynes adjourned the meeting at 6:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:
Lana C. Bluege, Minute-taker
March 21, 2016

Respectfully edited by:
Tara Kessler, Planner
April 12, 2016