

TOWN OF DURHAM
Conservation Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, April 14, 2015
7:00 at the Durham Public Library

Members present: Jon Herzig (7:10 PM), Rick Huntley, Bill LaFlamme, Lucy Meigs, Bob Melvin, Bob Thody, Bill Ward

Members excused: Carl Dahlman and Josh Miller

Call to Order/Roll Call: Rick Huntley called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

Amendments to Agenda/Approval of Agenda: Bill LaFlamme, seconded by Bob Melvin to approve the March agenda as distributed, made a motion. Motion passed with one abstention by Jon Herzig.

Approval of March regular meeting minutes: Rick Huntley noted one correction to the March minutes as the event should be *Relay for Life*, not Live. Bill LaFlamme, seconded by Bob Melvin to approve the March 2015 regular meeting minutes as corrected, made a motion. Motion passed with one abstention by Jon Herzig.

Payment of Bills: Bill Ward, seconded by Bob Melvin to approve payment of \$25 to Pam Huntley for secretarial services and to pay the 2015 annual membership to the Middlesex Land Trust for \$100, made a motion. Motion passed with abstentions by Rick Huntley and Jon Herzig.

Public Session: Sheehan Michael was present and asked who the property steward is for Curtis Woodlands. Charles Ingold was present and pointed out to Sheehan. Rick Huntley showed a Weed Wrench tool from CFPA to Charles. The tool is used for pulling small trees and shrubs out of the ground by the roots, especially invasive species. Joe Pasquale asked if there was any further discussion with Laura Francis about the handling of the recently acquired property on Guilford Road by the Town of Durham. Rick Huntley stated that there has been minimal additional discussion. NRCS will be looking at options for uses of the property and maintenance of the Coginchaug River. Rick's expectation is that it will not be managed by the Conservation Commission and maybe not by the Agriculture Commission. He is hoping that a separate stewardship committee will be appointed to steward properties that are not explicitly under the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission. Bob Melvin asked if there were restrictions placed on the property. Dick Porter responded that no restrictions were mentioned at the Town meeting when the property was accepted.

Mountain Bike Trail Construction on the Pisgah Mountain/Chalker Brook Valley Property – Jon Petersen, NEMBA: Jon Petersen has built trails on the Rockland Preserve in Madison and the red trails at Miller's Pond. The Commission has been investigating ways to get more people to use the property in a way that is more respectful of the land. It is hoped if more people are using the property, ATV and 4-wheel drive vehicles will be discouraged. One idea is to extend the ride ability from the Rockland Preserve up onto this property. It is hoped that a piece of the mountain bike trail could be a multiuse trail to get a section of the Mattabesett Trail off paved roads and into the woods. Rick Huntley, seconded by Bob Melvin to approve the construction of mountain bike trail on the Pisgah Mountain/Chalker Brook Valley property, with the proof of appropriate insurance and signing of volunteer waivers made a motion. Discussion ensued. Bob Melvin asked about additional parking areas. It is felt that no additional areas would be necessary. Rick Huntley intends to request the parking area at Cream Pot Road be expanded. The New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA) rider community will police riders if necessary to keep them off the "Blue Blazed" trails. Signage will be placed to make it clear what is a bike trail versus a hiking trail. Mr. Petersen has not seen that the trails encourage use by dirt bikes. There is a woods road in a swampy area that they will block and keep it blocked. Motion passed unanimously.

Property Steward Reports/Parcel Status Updates

- Whites Farm – Jack Stahl: no report. Rick Huntley reported that Public Works has cut down the dead tree. Public Works will also re-grade the swales before June 30th. The dirt piles will be removed sometime soon.
- Pent Road/Parmelee Hill Road/David Road – Melynda Naples: Melynda reported that she has not had any success

contacting the painter to paint the one section of the barn that was missed because the door was open. She suggested that perhaps Dick McManus could follow-up with the painter. Some of the paint to be used for touch-up is also requested. She indicated that more stone is needed on the driveway due to settling. She reported there is a student doing a documentary. Bill Milardo is testing the well water monthly. The March testing showed an elevated coliform level and the well was treated. The well issue was discussed. The water tank is no longer leaking. Bob Melvin reported on the meeting with Town officials. It would cost too much to move the tank so the drilling of a new well is the proposed resolution. There were questions about the location and yield of a new well by Bob Thody. A new well would cost around \$7,500 versus tens of thousands of dollars to abandon the tank in place and install a new tank. Bob Thody was very concerned with the fact that the water tank was installed and did not maintain the proper distance from the well. Rick Huntley reported that the well casing was repaired at one time. It was cut and a collar put on and never welded to the new casing. Rick Huntley stated that it is the intent of the Commission based upon a prior motion to have the water tank removed and to get a suitable water supply to run the operation. Lucy Meigs, seconded by Bill Ward that if the water tank is not removed, that a new well is drilled following all the regulations and ensuring that there is adequate potable yield for the operation of a farm and future uses, made a motion. Discussion ensued. Dick Porter commented that the Town should fix the well, remove the tank, and install a single piece tank in an appropriate location. Joe Pasquale echoed Dick Porter's comment. Mr. Pasquale suggested draining the tank to see if the issues with the well are resolved. If so, then a new location should be sought for the water tank. Roger Passavant added that the Town would be setting a poor precedent if considering leaving the tank in the current location. He also agrees that the tank should be drained at least to the seam. Let's correct the mistake and do it right. Rick Huntley commented there were many discussions on the installation of the water tank. There is still the issue of the electric fence at the original location of the tank where it is proposed to drill a new well. If a well was drilled there, then the fence would have to be moved further down the hill to keep the animals 75 feet away. Jon Herzig commented that the issue needs to be remediated now. Rick commented that the well casing is probably not intact and that is causing issues. If in fact the tank is not leaking, then there is a problem from some other source. Rick cautioned about saying that the tank is the sole issue. There were many comments to start with draining the water tank and testing the well water. The Conservation Commission is not a regulatory body and the Town Sanitarian has the regulatory authority. Motion passed unanimously. Rick Huntley stated that the original motion made previously to remove or fill the tank stands, it has not been rescinded. Joe Pasquale and the Agriculture Commission want to see the problem resolved properly.

- Howd Road – Josh Miller: no update. Rick Huntley has the map of the property. Public Works has a gate to install and parking lot work to finish. An analysis by DEEP is needed to determine if bow hunting can be allowed.
- Pisgah Mountain and Chalker Brook Valley – Bill LaFlamme & Rick Huntley: Bill LaFlamme reported that there were quite a few deer carcasses on the property over the winter. Signs need to be posted. Available Commission members will meet April 19, 2015 at 11 AM to post signs.
- Curtis Woodlands – Mark Smolley & Charles Ingold: Rick Huntley reported that he will be requesting that Public Works adds additional bollards with cross pieces around the parking area. Public works will install a double-gate at the opening in the stone bar way. Charles Ingold reported that there is no ATV activity so far and that there are a couple of hunter stands still up. Sue Michael commented that she has found lots of wildflowers specimens on the property.
- Portion of Wimler Property with Public Access – Dick Porter: no report.
- Sawmill Road – Ray Koba: no update.

Old and New Business

Status of Deerfield Farm well issue – proposed resolution: discussed above.

Status/review of proposed open-space regulations revisions: no update.

Status of Review of Plan of C & D: no update.

Index of all open areas as mandated by the Connecticut General Statutes, Section 7-131a (b): no update.

Budget Request for 2015/2016 Fiscal Year: Rick Huntley reported that the Commission's budget for 2015/2016 is \$7,650. This is less than what was requested because the Commission has not spent their entire budget over the last couple of years.

Sign for Memorial Tree Grove: Rick Huntley needs to contact Torrance Downs to get started on the sign.

Status of ERT Comprehensive Plan Request: The request for a Curtis Woodlands comprehensive management plan has been approved and work should start soon.

Website Content for Conservation Commission: no update. If members have suggestions for content it should be emailed to Rick Huntley.

MyTownTrails: The contract has been approved for one year. GPS trail data will likely be provided by CFPA. The trail on Curtis Woodland will need to be walked and have GPS data points taken. There was a Boy Scout from Troop 27 present to observe a Town meeting and it was suggested by Rick Huntley that perhaps the Boy Scouts could re-blaze the trail as a community service project.

Report of Co-Chairmen: Rick Huntley and Bob Melvin met with Town officials on the well issue. Rick Huntley, seconded by Bob Thody, to purchase two Pullerbear Grip XL tools at a cost of less than \$300, made a motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Geoff Colegrove contacted Rick regarding the Guilford property (James Valley Estates) that you can only get to from Durham. There is some controversy over access to the open space parcel purchased by the Guilford Land Trust and managed by the town and the Town of Durham contributed \$20,000 to the acquisition. Rick requested that if signage goes up on the property, the Town of Durham is recognized as having contributed to the acquisition.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Pam Huntley
Recording Secretary