

**Minutes of the Peterborough Conservation Commission Meeting
March 25, 2010, Peterborough Town House, 7 p.m.**

Present: Swift Corwin, Bryn Dumas, Matt Lundsted, John Patterson, Francie Von Mertens

Excused: Jo Anne Carr, John Kerrick, Robert Wood

Guest: Dick Estes, Water Resources Subcommittee

January's minutes were approved (there was no February meeting), as well as payment of NH Association of Conservation Commissions dues (\$275).

Town lands easement

John Patterson reported that the Monadnock Conservancy board approved accepting a conservation easement on the Wheeler, Babine and Lowe town parcels (120 Ac), and the time has come for the ConCom to formally vote funding approval before the Conservancy proceeds further.

Patterson said estimated expenses are \$8,100 (an estimate intended to be higher than what most likely will be actual costs), and the Conservancy has secured a \$3,000 grant to partner in meeting those expenses.

Swift Corwin made the following motion (Matt Lundsted second):

Move to approve funds to the Monadnock Conservancy not to exceed \$5,000 from the Land Acquisition and Management Fund in support of the conservation easement on three town parcels.

The motion passed unanimously.

Patterson will notify the Conservancy. He also is gathering relevant deeds to help with the title search. The Conservancy has some concerns that the 10-year period in which a logical heir can step forward to claim a property taken by tax deed has not run its course on the Lowe property. The fact that back taxes are considerable, that ownership has been a blank for over 100 years, and the property is small and landlocked, suggests those concerns should be minimal.

Patterson will flag the property borders to speed the process for Conservancy staffer Anne McBride – thereby minimizing staff time charges.

Corwin said that boundary marking should be done following generally accepted protocol. Fact that surrounding property has been posted against hunting means that town property lines need to be clearly blazed.

He further suggested that other town conservation lands have their boundaries marked.

Patterson will inquire what tagging Monadnock Conservancy intends to do along the property. They hold an easement on a good percentage of the surrounding properties as well.

Francie Von Mertens said that Rick Van de Poll is planning a work gang – tentatively August 14 – to clear the Class VI road that is the beginning access route to the town parcels. ConCom assistance is needed, both of members and recruits by members.

MacDowell Dam Dredge and Fill application

Matt Lundsted reported on the Army Corps wetlands application for work to repair bank erosion that happened in last August's rains. The project includes expansion of an existing swale to re-route the (very) intermittent stream that caused erosion of the steep bank below the dam. Lundsted said he saw no reason for the ConCom to exercise its option to intercede.

Wetlands Ordinance – update and next steps

Matt Lundsted reported that the Planning Board at the March 15 public hearing voted not to bring the proposed wetlands ordinance changes to vote in May. He said that with only one hearing scheduled, there was no time to make changes that any ordinance needs after a public hearing process.

Von Mertens said that many comments were in oration rather than question form, and it was difficult to clarify the many misstatements and misunderstandings that were aired. She questioned whether a more productive public hearing protocol could be recommended.

Lundsted, Von Mertens and Jo Anne Carr have requested agenda time at the Planning Board's next meeting to determine next steps. The Planning Board has expressed interest in proceeding.

Transcript Dam

Dick Estes, a member of the Water Resources Subcommittee, asked whether the ConCom had been consulted regarding repair of the Transcript Dam on library corner – a process required by the upcoming bridge replacement and roadway upgrade.

Von Mertens said no, not yet. Brief discussion followed, but members felt they lacked expertise on the pros and cons of dam removal. A logical next step would be to talk with Rodney Bartlett to see if various options other than repair/replacement were being considered.

(Note: following the meeting, Swift Corwin contacted members by e-mail suggesting that the ConCom has a definite role in researching the costs/benefits of dam removal. He is pursuing the matter, including inquiries with Henniker ConCom following a dam removal in that town.)

Town properties

Von Mertens said the Open Space Committee is working with Fash in OCD to come up with a conservation land map separate from the current Open Space Map that shows water department land and others.

She said there are odd properties around town, some under ConCom and some not, that have potential for stewardship or at least boundary marking.

She showed an aerial photo of the town-owned 28-acre "Poplar land" just north of the Starkweather capped landfill that is just north of EMS. It has generous Contoocook frontage, and a derelict frontage on Route 202N. It's not classified as conservation land. Floodplain and the Superfund site next door make its development unlikely.

Von Mertens asked if there was interest in taking the property on as conservation land with attendant stewardship possibilities. There was no interest.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m. The next regularly scheduled meeting is Thursday, April 29, 7 p.m. at the Town House.

/fvm