

**Minutes of the Peterborough Conservation Commission Meeting
May 20, 2010, Peterborough Town House, 7 p.m.**

Present: Jo Anne Carr, Swift Corwin, Bryn Dumas, John Kerrick, Matt Lundsted
John Patterson, Francie Von Mertens, Robert Wood
Guests: Dick Estes, Susan Stanbury

Roadside tree cutting

Dick Estes voiced concern over PSNH/Asplundh clearing of trees along powerlines, sparked by a Mason ConCom member's report of extreme cutting. After the ice storm, laws for cutting have apparently been loosened.

He will look into what the new rules are.

Swift Corwin will look into whether the town has a tree warden and/or what logical role town can play to have some oversight on tree cutting.

Wetlands Working Group

Matt Lundsted gave an update on the wetlands protection ordinance process. He said the Planning Board is eager to proceed and the WWG continues to meet to make changes to the ordinance based on public hearing comments. Outreach to Chamber, EDA, Water Resources Subcommittee, Open Space, ZBA is planned. Goal is to have three public meetings including two public hearings in July-August, perhaps to bring it to a vote in November on primary day.

Swift expressed concern that the ordinance, by being different than other towns, was problematic.

Jo Anne Carr explained that in most cases, the 100-foot buffer wouldn't impact a project, but if relief is sought it's a simple matter of having the wetland scientist who is delineating a wetland fill out the grid. The grid is a simplified version of the NH Method which wetland scientists are familiar with.

Lundsted said that by meeting performance standards, further relief in buffer width is possible.

Carr said the WWG is recommending that the Planning Board rescind the separate Shoreland Protection Zone to have the Wetlands Protection District apply to both wetland and shoreland, which simplifies the process. Going to the Planning Board rather than Zoning Board and Planning Board, as currently required, also simplifies the process.

Lundsted will e-mail the current ordinance draft to ConCom members.

Transcript Dam

Corwin reported that Rodney Bartlett is meeting next Wednesday in Concord with the state dam committee about removal or repair of the Transcript Dam. John Kerrick and Woody Wood expressed interest in attending.

Corwin will get them information about the meeting.

Von Mertens recapped Bartlett's statements about the dam at Town Meeting, including remarking on its historic and scenic values; that there is grant money to remove it but not to fix it; and there would be a public process in determining its future. Von Mertens said that written comment from relevant town committees (including Conservation and Heritage) should be part of that public comment process.

Conservation easement monitoring

Susan Stanbury volunteered to oversee monitoring of the 21 easements held by the town. Von Mertens will help familiarize her with the easements and monitoring protocol with the goal of developing a triage system to address easements most in need of attention, and an overall timeline/system to make sure the ConCom meets its obligation to monitor easements annually.

Corwin suggested, and all agreed, that when that goal is met, a dinner at Harlow's would be in order.

Patterson and Trautwein will be monitoring the Daloz easement soon, important as the Daloz land is for sale; Kerrick volunteered to do the Monahon easements and continue with the gravel pit/Longhill Estates easement that he and Richard Pendleton monitored last year.

Appreciation was expressed to Stanbury for volunteering to take on a project in need of consistent attention.

Conservation in 2020 / newspaper article

The Ledger-Transcript has requested an article from a town ConCom/Open Space perspective that addresses **Conservation in 2020**, part of the paper's 2020 series. Harris Center and Monadnock Conservancy will likely be doing companion articles.

Von Mertens agreed to write it with input from ConCom and Open Space. Input: reference the town Master Plan as that document addresses future needs (farm and forest land, water resource land, recreation, etc.), including need to direct future development to existing developed areas (infill) rather than further fragmenting farm/forest land, wildlife habitats/corridors, walking trails, etc.

It was agreed that a crystal ball isn't available, but the trend towards "green" thought and action will likely continue, including downsizing scale of new homes, locavore mindset, attention to water resources ("water will be the new oil").

Aging population requires smaller homes. Also increases turnover of land as it passes to next generation, making conservation of key resource land important to do now before that transfer and likely "for sale" outcome.

It's cheaper in the long run to conserve natural resources than pay the price of contaminating them, whether it be water, soil, air or biodiversity.

Growing attention to conserving farmland to make locavore possible.

Use no jargon ("biodiversity," "ecological services")

What impact will economic strain have on a conservation mindset? Hard to take long view when you're struggling to pay your taxes. Unlikely that significant town tax money will be directed towards conservation, making funding partnerships all the more important, as well as relying on landowning families' desire to conserve their land rather than develop it. Town has strong tradition (>30 families have conserved their land).

The underlying question: How much land should be conserved? Can't quantify, given that NYC has more conserved land (27%) than Peterborough. Town has prioritized natural resource land it wishes to conserve. Doesn't break down into number of acres or percentage of land in town that's conserved.

Back to Master Plan goal of an active functioning natural landscape surrounding existing "village centers."

Will we be closer to that goal in 2020? Yes. As environmental degradation continues elsewhere, townspeople in Peterborough and other Monadnock Region towns will increasingly value and work towards conserving what makes this area where we want to live, raise our families, etc.

Von Mertens will draft the article and send it around.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m. The next regularly scheduled meeting will be the **third Thursday of June, the 17th**.

/fvm