

**Minutes of the Peterborough Conservation Commission  
January 20, 2011, Peterborough Town House, 7 p.m.**

Present: Swift Corwin, Bryn Dumas, John Kerrick, Matt Lundsted, Susan Stanbury, Francie Von Mertens, Robert Wood

Excused: Jo Anne Carr; John Patterson

**Minutes** for November's meeting were approved. (There was no ConCom meeting in December.)

**Budget** items were approved: \$300 to Annie Card Creative Services; and \$250 for NHACC annual membership.

**ConVal senior class conservation project**

Von Mertens said the ConVal senior class president had contacted her to help outreach to various conservation groups to come up with workgang projects for April 2. EMS is funding their class trip (river rafting) in exchange for conservation workgangs in the district. Once a handful of projects are determined, the seniors will do outreach for additional community volunteers.

These ideas were offered:

- birdhouse building and placement
- brush cutting/hauling at town conservation land (Walcott/Burke Rd./Fremont)
- coordinating with ConVal environmental ed teacher Dana Wood for a project relevant to the curriculum, giving students a voice in the process
- revegetation/tree planting along bike path/eroded river bank, possibly with trees from state nursery in Boscawan
- wildlife planting blueberry/juneberry/crabapple/viburnum/etc. along ConVal road frontage where PSNH cut the pine trees / coordinated with pro bono landscape architect
- recommendation that Jason Tremblay at MacDowell Dam, Rodney Bartlett, and Scott Bradford be contacted to see if they are in need of a conservation workgang

**Action:** Von Mertens is meeting with senior class officers Tuesday at 2:45 p.m. Corwin expressed interest in the project and will attend also.

**Town conservation land – stewardship**

Corwin has updated the town's status as a Tree Farm after being contacted by forester David Kent. Corwin explained that this status requires periodic updating of forestry management plans. Plans for Fremont, Babine/Wheeler, Kane (Pack Monadnock western slope), and Walcott exist but are outdated. Corwin suggested several other potential properties.

**Action:** Corwin will get copies of the existing forestry plans for the next meeting.

As for forest encroaching on fields, Burke Road field and Walcott field are in need of attention. (Von Mertens organizes occasional neighborhood workgangs to keep forest at bay at the Fremont land.)

**Action:** Dumas and Corwin will assess the Walcott field on May 1.

continued . . .

### **Permitting / ZBA / variance application**

The ZBA has requested ConCom comment on an after-the-fact variance application to allow a shed in the Wetlands Protection District. Upon examining sketches submitted with the application that show shed, house and wetland locations, it was determined that there appear to be reasonable alternatives shed placement that are not in the WPD; and that the existing shed appears to be easily movable.

**Action:** Von Mertens will write a letter of comment to the ZBA to that effect.

### **Zoning / proposed wetlands article**

Von Mertens spoke to the frustrations of the public hearing process where only those opposed are motivated to attend the required public hearings, with newspaper headlines then proclaiming strong opposition to the proposed changes (ex. "Criticism is high in wetlands debate"). Those who trust the planning process, or support greater wetlands protection, are not similarly motivated to make time in their busy schedules to attend to speak in favor.

Opponents are having difficulty moving beyond expansion of the jurisdictional 50-foot WPD to 100 feet to see that relief is offered through a Conditional Use Permit with the Planning Board in those cases where the presence of wetlands provides a challenge.

At a public hearing, the planning board "hears" the public. It's not a time to rebut misstatements or misinterpretations – that sometimes end up in the newspaper. Also, understandably, the Planning Board might come to think opposition is the majority – not the minority – voice.

Lundsted, a member of the Wetlands Working Group that helped draft the proposed changes, said there was a possibility the Planning Board would scale the jurisdictional 100 feet back to the current 50 feet. The significant changes to be proposed would focus on clearly defining the WPD as an area to remain naturally vegetated; subject to permanent boundary tagging ("monumentation"); that wetland permitting be through a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) with the Planning Board – not the current Special Exception through the ZBA. (Current ordinance language does not make it clear the "buffer" is to remain naturally vegetated. Often it's turned to lawn or otherwise landscaped.)

Members were in strong agreement that the 50 feet remain inviolate, not be segmented as buffer+setback, and not be subject to encroachment through the CUP process.

**Action:** Lundsted will communicate that to the Planning Board at its January 25 workshop at 5:30 p.m.

The next public hearing on the zoning change most likely is January 31. Stanbury expressed interest in attending as someone who would speak in favor.

### **Conservation easement update**

- Patterson has monitored the Daloz and DuBois easements.
- At long last, the Babine, Wheeler and Lowe conservation easement with the Monadnock Conservancy has been signed at filed at the registry.

Agenda item "Commission member projects / the year ahead" was postponed until the February 17 meeting.

/fvm