

**Draft minutes of the Peterborough Conservation Commission Meeting
March 17, 2011, Peterborough Town House, 7 p.m.**

Present: Swift Corwin, Bryn Dumas, John Kerrick, Matt Lundsted, John Patterson,
Susan Stanbury, Francie Von Mertens
Guest: Eric Thum, Open Space Committee

February's minutes were approved.

Conservation Easement

Eric Thum of the Open Space Committee presented reasons why the Open Space Committee recommends the Conservation Commission accept a conservation easement on a 52-acre parcel off Route 123/Elm Hill Road.

The parcel ranks as medium- to high-priority given its location abutting Casalis State Forest and existing trails that would add to the Casalis trail network.

The parcel is located in a rural part of town where housing development is undesirable following town Master Plan goals.

Relevant to natural resource protection, by deed restriction there is to be no development beyond the footprints of four existing houses and various sheds; and a field that hosts bobolinks and monarch butterflies is to be mowed in September so as not to disturb those populations.

Relevant to the town accepting the easement, Eric Thum said that New Hampshire Audubon, The Nature Conservancy, and New England Wilderness Trust had been queried about taking the easement, and for varying reasons that probability was low to non-existent. Thum suggested that local knowledge of the property, and the deed restrictions that protect the field and limit further development, are compelling reasons for the town to accept the conservation easement.

John Kerrick invited comment.

Swift Corwin asked if the trails would be open to the public, and Eric Thum confirmed they would, accessed through Casalis.

Susan Stanbury, as ConCom member who oversees easement monitoring, spoke in favor of the easement and again mentioned the procedures she followed that included meeting with the Open Space Committee and Office of Community Development.

Francie Von Mertens said that the easement language would make it clear that forestry for salvage after fire or storm, or to combat insect infestation, would be permitted despite the landowner's intent to ban commercial forestry. Swift Corwin said that salvage timber typically is sold, and therefore the easement language needs to allow that. He also said that given the parcel's agricultural soils, the easement language should have flexibility to allow expansion of the field for agriculture.

John Kerrick noted a general consensus in support of the town accepting the easement, with attention to the easement language as it is drafted.

ConVal Workgang

With persistent snow cover, the April 2 ConVal regional workgang that Corwin and Von Mertens are assisting with has some challenges. The Stephenson/Walcott field is one venue; the Harris Center Elm Street lot is another possible venue that would have

easier access. Goal is brush cutting/hauling. Jason Tremblay at MacDowell Dam is a likely third venue, although given budget cutbacks weekend staffing is not guaranteed.

ConCom enthusiasm for a YouTube component to the workgang projects remains high. Von Mertens will communicate that to the senior class officers in charge of the day.

Town conservation lands / management plans

Swift Corwin will work up proposals/procedures for updating management plans for town conservation properties. In answer to Susan Stanbury's question about scope, he confirmed that the scope is broader than forestry. It typically encompasses natural resources relevant to each property, and reflects the landowner's priorities for each property.

Easement monitoring

John Patterson, as follow-up to monitoring the Daloz easement, determined that town records and the state registry of deeds do not reflect that the property "lost" 15 acres when an abutter surveyed the common boundary. Forty-five acres now are 25.

Addressing the presence of a shack on the easement property, John Patterson will draft a letter from the Conservation Commission to the property owner about that nonconformance with the terms of the easement.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m. The next regularly scheduled meeting will be April 14.

/fvm