

**Peterborough Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
July 19, 2018, Peterborough Town House, 7 p.m.**

Present: Jo Anne Carr, Bryn Dumas, John Kerrick, John Patterson, Liz Thomas, Francie Von Mertens, Robert Wood; Barbara Miller, Select Board Liaison; Ruth Holmes, Agricultural Commission
Guests: Molly Badwary, Mona Brooks, David Delworth, Libby Reinhardt, Mike Teitsch, Peggy Van Valkenburgh

Cheney Field

Peggy Van Valkenburgh, speaking for the field neighbors, reported that a large group of Cheney Field neighbors ("fiftyish") are eager to assist the Conservation Commission in its stewardship of the field beyond arranging and funding the annual field mowing. Molly Badwary, another field abutter, agreed that the field is a resource for the broader community with far greater potential than realized at present.

Peggy Van Valkenburgh said the neighbors await direction from the ConCom. Communication has begun, resulting in a neighbor committing to mow the Cranberry Meadow through trail in addition to a spur down to the small pond with a bench soon to be built and placed under a large pondside white pine. Conversations also have included best treatment for invasive buckthorn and autumn olive, and neighbors will be attending a Cooperative Extension workshop on meadows as pollinator habitat.

Abutter Mike Teitsch asked if the Conservation Commission's unanimous decision regarding cattle grazing is the final decision, or whether an appeal or reapplication is possible.

Francie Von Mertens said that it's her sense that it's uncharted territory for the ConCom and the town.

Bryn Dumas recommended that any proposal for leasing town conservation land for private use be tabled until the ConCom has formalized its process for considering such proposals.

John Patterson, regarding "sinkholes" in the field, asked about liability issues, if any, relating to a visitor's mishap be it sinkholes or protruding roots on a trail.

Barbara Miller, select board liaison to the ConCom, said she would look into that.

Natural Resource Inventory of town conservation land

Discussion centered on contracting for NRIs on certain town properties, determining "what's there" in terms of natural resources. Von Mertens asked if priorities would be stated by the ConCom, as in management recommendations, or whether it's a straight inventory, one size fits all. Bryn Dumas said it could be prescriptive: certain property NRIs might highlight agricultural potential among the natural resources, although a soils analysis would be common to all.

Cheney Field abutter Libby Reinhardt suggested that managing for pollinator habitat relates to agriculture given the decline in pollinators and their importance to plant pollination. She said that "meadow people" and "ag people" meet on common ground there, but she fears the two might be seen as adversaries if care is not taken to recognize common ground.

As for a bid process for hiring an NRI consultant, Carr said a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) is different than an RFP proposal, and someone could be hired based on an RFQ versus a straight dollar comparison involved in an RFP.

She said she would draft both an RFP and RFQ.

Von Mertens cited Rick van de Poll as someone with teaching background at Antioch who she felt the ConCom would learn a lot from as part of an NRI process. She asked if the ConCom could hire him based on knowledge of his skills, which Bryn Dumas also cited, skipping a prolonged bid process.

Barbara Miller said she would look into whether special circumstances could shorten that process.

Dumas has been in conversation with the Ag Commission about a joint AgCom and ConCom effort relating to assessing agricultural resources both public and private in town, including a subcommittee of members from each group to help coordinate.

Von Mertens recommended contracting Dr. Van de poll to do a Cheney Field-Wheeler Trail property NRI now during the summer season, with NRIs of other town fields to follow. Contracting for one would help the ConCom determine if the results merit the expense of doing more.

Carr said she would draft the Requests both for one property and for four, to include all four fields managed by the ConCom.

Conservation Easements

All agreed to hire Richard Pendleton to monitor the Fellows and Millon easements in addition to the six easements he monitored last year.

Budget

June's minutes were approved, as was reimbursement of Von Mertens for two signage costs. The ConCom's Land Acquisition and Management Fund received \$1,750 Land Use Change Tax conversion fees for last year, 50% of what the town received.

Commercial water extraction

Given concerns previously discussed about commercial water extraction of approximately 3 million gallons a month, Jo Anne Carr explained that for the town to determine base flow is a costly process. Curtailing commercial extraction during periods of official drought requires base flow information to judge ground- and surface water impacts of extraction against. The Upland Springs operation is grandfathered, so no curtailment protocol is in place other than a 3 million gallons a month limit that the state monitors for compliance.

Evans Flats Trail

Peter Harrison volunteered to be trail steward, and in the past few months has cleared the trail, no small task. Likely owing to beaver activity, more boardwalk is needed, as well as some replacement. Mr. Harrison is willing to do the work if provided the lumber.

Woody Wood will walk the trail with him to assess lumber needs and beavers.

Riverfront parking lot

Site preparation has begun on the town parking lot. Wood asked if the ConCom had received updated landscaping plans for the 50-foot buffer. There has been no communication.

Regarding wetland mitigation for the Library bridge, Hoyle, Tanner is optimistic placing a conservation easement on the two "Sawmill" lots will past muster. Landscaping the parking lot buffer to shade waterways did not.