

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

Present: Jo Anne Carr, John Kerrick, Matt Lundsted, John Patterson, Robert Wood, Francie Von Mertens; Rodney Bartlett, Town Administrator; Kimberly Peace, Hoyle, Tanner; Liz Thomas

Main Street bridge mitigation

Kimberly Peace, Hoyle, Tanner engineer, explained that shoreland impacts of the Main Street bridge project require mitigation of functions and values lost in process of narrowing the river channel. Likely range of value is up to \$100,000, with the town responsible for 20%.

Discussion included purchasing a lot on Hunt Road as wellhead protection. Jo Anne Carr made the point that if the current zoning overhaul passes, it could be subdivided to greater extent than current zoning allows, with greater watershed impacts.

Matt Lundsted cited a culvert on Sand Hill Road that showed up on a recent assessment as inadequate for aquatic species passage.

Rodney mentioned placing conservation easements on certain town open space lands that have wetlands or shoreland.

Mitigation ideally is near shoreland/wetland impacts. Creating buffer and river shading along the town's approved new downtown parking lot/bus stop emerged as the group's consensus recommendation, with possible shade plantings at Putnam Park, too. Native plants (shrubs and trees) benefit wildlife (oaks, willows, birch, cherry, maple are among the leaders), and many would shade the river. Current conditions provide neither wildlife habitat or river shade.

Kimberly Peace will draft an assessment of the functions and values that landscaping the shoreline would provide, to be submitted to NHDES as the Conservation Commission's recommendation as requested by NHDES.

Cheney Avenue field lease for grazing

Rodney Bartlett presented a request to the Select Board from a resident to lease the Cheney Avenue town-owned field as summer grazing for 12 head of cattle. Soil amendments to create high-quality organic grassland are included in the proposal, and perhaps orchard replacement/creation.

A quick internet search suggests that one acre per head is needed. The property is 23 acres with a forested portion, small pond, and wetlands. The proposal is for rotating grazing areas and fencing, and avoiding impacts to wetlands and existing trails.

Discussion included the positive of supporting local agriculture; concern over loss of meadow habitat biodiversity (pollinator habitat and nesting bobolinks, a species of concern in the state's Wildlife Action Plan, included).

The field currently is maintained as wild meadow, a declining habitat, with late summer mowing intended to minimize wildlife impacts while keeping woody vegetation from colonizing the field.

The field is surrounded by house lots, suggesting access issues.

Neighbor response was mentioned as an unknown, and possibly out of the purview of the ConCom which as field steward focuses on natural resources. However, it was noted that neighbors contribute to the annual mowing costs and also helped

conserve the field as town conservation land. Accordingly, the ConCom is sensitive to neighbors.

In response to a question about leasing protocol, Rodney said the town would not have to put grazing or other agricultural uses out to bid before accepting a proposal for private use of a town property.

Members mentioned other fields, privately owned, as alternatives.

Rodney will relay the ConCom's initial assessment of the proposal to its proposer. If requested by the Select Board, a more formal assessment including site visit would follow, and written comment.

Town water supply

Rodney Bartlett described a multi-faceted process he launched to acquire an approved drinking water well on land in Sharon and Jaffrey as a replacement for the town's South Well, closed by contamination from disposal of solvents years back by Ball Bearing.

Purchase includes a large parcel as part of wellhead protection, likely with The Nature Conservancy as holder of a drinking water protection easement. TNC's Wales Preserve abuts the property to the east.

Funding partners include a drinking water trust fund set up by various MTBE contamination settlements and Ball Bearing as part of its ongoing Superfund settlement.

The well would supplement existing Tarbell, Summer and North Wells, with a 500,000 gal/day capacity. Current town draw is just over 460,000 gal/day, rotated among the three wells.

Rodney is balancing many partners with many meetings. Members wished him well.

New member

Francie Von Mertens will request the Select Board approve Liz Thomas as a returning member of the Conservation Commission.

Other

--Members approved reprinting the trail guide, 1,000 copies.

--March minutes were approved.

--It was noted that The Pearl and Bantam restaurants have joined the campaign to limit plastic straws. They are supplied only if requested.

--ConVal's graphic design department is unable to take on a plastic straw poster campaign this school year.

--Nate Morison was hired to selectively cut aspen and honeysuckle encroaching on the Fremont Field front field

--The ConCom's 15th annual Earth Day roadside trash pick-up was organized, 20th-24th. Anyone not involved can tackle a stretch of Rte 202 south from Hancock line, always a stretch hard to cover. ConVal Interact Club does from the school north for a stretch.

/fvm