

Peterborough Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
May 9, 2018, Cheney Avenue field site visit, 5 p.m.

Present: Jo Anne Carr, Swift Corwin, Matt Lundsted, Liz Thomas, John Patterson, Francie Von Mertens, Robert Wood; Select Board liaison Tyler Ward

Assessing the Cheney Field for cattle grazing, Jo Anne Carr proposed and others agreed that the ConCom generate criteria to consistently assess all town conservation fields regarding their natural resource values and management priorities (Fremont, Burke Road, Cheney, Walcott). The three conservation values typically mentioned in a conservation easement deed are a good place to start: 1. Farm and/or forest; 2. scenic and/or recreation; 3. wildlife. These reflect criteria the IRS established to help determine public benefit. For a land trust accepting the easement, they indicate to the IRS that it is following the land trust's nonprofit mission. Other natural resources ConCom mentioned relating to the Cheney field: wetlands/water quality.

Members will email other relevant features/resources to Von Mertens who will bring a draft to the May 16 meeting.

Regarding grazing field potential in town, members suggested encouraging the Agricultural Commission to inventory private fields in the area. A few logical ones were mentioned.

Members walked the field to assess wetlands/upland, boundaries, and field access. Numerous sinkholes on the downslope heading east suggest a combination of hydrology and possible burial of stumps/rocks. (Rumored cattle burial by Cheney's is unlikely.)

Members recommended that a similar assessment be done by the potential leasee and Rodney Bartlett with a few ConCom members accompanying them.

Von Mertens will relay that recommendation to Rodney Bartlett to arrange.

Regarding language of the conservation easement deed citing agriculture, Von Mertens reported a discussion earlier that day with Abraham Ames, Forest Society monitor of the easement. He explained that purposes cited in a conservation easement deed are "not prescriptive, not you shall" undertake forestry (or agriculture), but are protective: If you chose to undertake agriculture/forestry, standard permitted uses, you must have a management plan—following Best Management Practices for forestry, and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) guidelines for agriculture. He said NRCS is the Forest Society's preferred overseer of agricultural practices and typically does a site visit/assessment.

Abraham said he would put this in writing if requested.

He placed stakes indicating approximate southerly boundary of the former Fernald property (new owners Badrawy) that runs deep (south) into the field.

Regarding oversight of the field, **RSA 36-A:4 Conservation Commission Powers** suggests that the ConCom has management oversight on the field. ConCom stewardship initiatives over the decades (trails creation, mowing, invasive species control) indicate active stewardship following management goals relating to scenic/recreation and wildlife.

Tyler Ward, Select Board liaison to the ConCom, mentioned plans for a residential "Agri-hood" on the Stone Barn property, suggesting the Cheney Field lease relates to that.

Von Mertens said that neighbors of the field have requested agenda time at the ConCom's May 16 meeting relating to leasing the field.

/fvm