

SELECTMEN'S WORKSHOP
Minutes of 03-22-10
4:20 p.m.

Selectmen:

(Absent with Notice)

Peter F. Brothers, Chairman
Miller C. Lovett, Vice Chairman
Nathan Torr
Charles G. Palm
Colette Worsman

Town Manager:

Recording Clerk:

Phillip L. Warren

Karin Landry

Call to Order: Chairman Peter Brothers called the meeting to order 4:20 p.m. He introduced the Board, Town Manager, and the Recording Clerk.

W10-14 Conservation Easement - Sherman Property

In October of 2007, John Sherman generously pledged to gift to the Town of Meredith a conservation easement on a 52-acre parcel with over 2,600' of abutment with the Page Pond Forest. Conservation Commission member Mark Billings identified the location of the property. The boundaries of the property have been walked and taped by members of the Commission. A class VI road off Blueberry Hill Rd. provides direct access for approved recreational activities and vehicles under the use limitation clause. In addition, access will be possible along a large portion of the 2,600' abutment with Page Pond Forest. Commission Chair Don McFarland described the natural features and topography of the property. The property is 50% wetlands and 50% upland forest, and supports a diversity of wildlife. The property has been well-maintained by Mr. Sherman.

Sections 4 through 12 of the Conservation Easement Deed are drawn from the standard language used in the Page Pond Deed. The relevant information specific to this easement is covered in the first three sections.

The purposes of the easement are similar and consistent with other conservation easements the Town holds, and are primarily for the protection of property for education as well as recreation. The easement will protect the natural habitat, the Page Brook prime wetland complex, open spaces, a high quality beaver marsh, and ground and surface water.

The property shall be maintained in perpetuity as open space and is subject to the use limitations set forth in the Deed.

The Grantor reserves the right to post the property against access, but under conditions in the Deed, where it is for safety purposes, and reserves the right to remove five cords of wood annually from the property. In addition, an existing oral agreement between Grantor and the owners of abutting property (the Pelczar's), will continue as long as they own the property. The agreement allows for the use of a 10' piece of land that falls within the boundary of the easement.

Selectman Worsman pointed out that the Board has been very careful to make certain there is no prohibition for snowmobilers on the Page Pond property, and would like it to be an activity that is not prohibited by the Easement Deed. She is in favor of including an affirmative statement in the Deed if snowmobiling will be allowed on the property. Mr. Billings explained that historically, the property has only been used for snowmobiling by abutters. Mr. Sherman explained that it is very rare that easements allow for unfettered public access and that it is his intention that the property have unfettered public access for anything other than motorized vehicles. There is an existing deed restriction on motorized vehicles on the nearby six-acre pond, and Mr. Sherman included the restriction in deference to his neighbors on the pond, as well as to accommodate his personal preferences. In addition, snowmobiling is an allowed activity on the Page Pond property, and is concentrated on a portion of that property where there is access to the existing trails. The trails are only allowed in designated areas, and there is an existing trail within 10' of the property included in the conservation easement. Mr. Sherman pointed out that the Town doesn't own the property, and reiterated that the deed restriction is in deference to those that live on the west side of the pond and himself. Selectman Worsman explained that she is considering the activities that will be allowed on the property in the distant future.

The Deed has been reviewed by Attorney Mattson, and his concerns have been addressed.

The Chair expressed appreciation for a wonderful opportunity for the Town to add a piece of property adjacent to the Page Pond Forest for recreational use, and for protection and conservation of the typography, wildlife, and history of the area.

Selectman Worsman inquired if the prohibition of trapping on the property includes removing a beaver building a dam that causes flooding. Mr. Sherman pointed out that considering the typography, it would be very difficult for a beaver to do so.

Section 3.A of the Easement Deed will be amended to reference Section 2.I of the Deed as opposed to Section 2.1.

Selectman Lovett expressed gratitude for Mr. Sherman's willingness to grant the easement, and acknowledged that it will enhance what is being done with Page Pond. The Chair thanked Mr. Sherman and the Conservation Commission for their efforts in putting the easement together. The Commission is willing to arrange for a tour of the property for interested members of the Board.

W10 -15 New Hampshire Humane Society Funding Request

At previous sessions, the Board asked for additional information regarding the Humane Society's funding request. The Society responded by way of correspondence dated March 11, 2010. Once it is determined whether the questions posed by the Board have been answered, and there has been the opportunity for additional dialogue, the matter can be scheduled for action at a regular Board meeting.

Selectman Lovett is confident there is sufficient information to make a decision to maintain the benefits previously provided to the Town.

Selectman Palm inquired whether those from jurisdictions that do not engage the Society for stray services are charged a fee for dropping off animals. The Town Manager clarified that a donation is suggested in those circumstances, and that Meredith residents would not be asked for a donation. In accordance with their mission, the Society accepts all strays, whether or not they receive a donation, and provides additional services including low cost spaying/neutering and a pet food pantry to all.

In accordance with a decision to level fund all outside agencies in 2010, dialogue ensued regarding funding the 503(c) nonprofit organization as an outside agency in the amount of \$9,500. The Board instructed the Town Manager to prepare the documentation to consider the Society's funding request as an outside agency for the calendar year January 1 through December 31, 2010, in the amount of \$9,500. Although there is general agreement among the Board that the services provided by the Society are a combination of outside agency and a contracted services, the organization will be considered an outside agency in order to move forward with providing services during 2010. The outside agency designation will be further considered as part of the vetting process for 2011. Selectman Lovett suggested keeping a designated amount to cover contractual matters, and transferring the remainder of the funding to the outside agency category. The Town Manager suggested entering into a grant agreement with the Humane Society in the amount of \$9,500. In return, they will provide specified stray animal services to the Town of Meredith, and additional services as part of their mission. Doing so will establish a contractual agreement between the Town and the Humane Society while the Society remains an outside agency. There was general agreement among the Board that a grant agreement is a good solution that resolves issues fairly expeditiously. The Board instructed the Town Manager to prepare the documentation necessary to enter into a grant agreement and present it for the Board's consideration at the next regular meeting.

MISCELLANEOUS

Dialogue ensued regarding a motion that was made at Town Meeting relative to the School Board. The Town Manager strongly recommended that the Board of Selectmen wait until after the School Board meets on Tuesday night to proceed with the matter, since there might be an amicable solution presented at that meeting. The Board made considerations for the 45-day timeframe attached to the motion. There was general agreement among the Board that no action will be taken until after the School Board meeting takes place. The Board will discuss the results of the School Board meeting at the special reorganization meeting scheduled for Friday, March 26.

The Chair explained that the Board normally reorganizes at the first meeting following Town Meeting, but that newly elected Board member Nate Torr was not able to attend the meeting due to commitments made prior to being elected. The meeting will be held at the community center on Friday, March 26, at 3 p.m.

Selectman Worsman motioned to adjourn the Workshop at 5:25 p.m. Seconded by Selectman Palm. 4-0. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Phillip L. Warren, Town Manager

Peter F. Brothers, Chairman

Karin Landry, Recording Clerk

Miller C. Lovett, Vice Chairman

Charles G. Palm

Colette Worsman