

Minutes of the Meredith Conservation Commission Meeting February 18th, 2010

Members present: Don MacFarlane, John Sherman, Peter Miller, Robert LeCount, Paula Wanzer, Mark Billings

Alternate members present: Robert Davis, Jacquie Colburn

Davis was appointed a voting member for this meeting.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman MacFarlane at 7:03 PM

Minutes of February 4th, 2010

On motion of Billings, seconded by Davis, the minutes of February 4th, 2010 were approved by unanimous vote.

Dredge and Fill Report

LeCount informed the Commission that, for reasons of age and health, he will transition from regular voting status to alternate membership and that Davis will assume responsibility for dredge and fill reports effective immediately. LeCount assured the Commission that he would still be involved with dredge and fill matters.

The following application to the Department of Environmental Services was reviewed since the last report:

Laraine Swett
62 Cattle Landing Rd
Tax Map U-33, Lot# 27

Recommended Approval
Repair/replace existing docking structure
and concrete steps.

186 Acre Forest - Naming

Wanzer reported the results of the balloting, as follows:

Meredith Community Forest – 56 votes
Meredith Village Forest – 28 votes
Jeness Hill Forest – 46 votes

Thus the 186 Acre Forest is now the Meredith Community Forest. The king is dead, long live the king!

Sherman Easement

Billings informed the Commission that counsel Lee Mattson wants baseline documentation attached to the easement, the documentation to include ecological assessment, maps, photographs, and other pertinent information. [Secretary's note: By "ecological assessment," Mattson probably meant Level I Environmental Assessment.]

Billings speculated that Mattson's intent is to indemnify the Town.

Sherman, speaking generically and not about the easement per se, objected to outside parties dictating the checklist of items to include in baseline documentation. He noted that the Commission does annual monitoring and documentation on all Town-owned conservation lands and easements (utilizing a checklist that meets State of New Hampshire LCIP and LCHIP Program guidelines). He expressed concern about the precedent Mattson is establishing. [Secretary's note: This is the second easement for which Mattson has required baseline documentation, the first being the Smyth Easement.]

Following discussion, Commission members concurred that the baseline documentation clause of the Sherman Easement use the word "may," not "must" or "will," leaving the choice of what to document to the Commission's discretion.

Regarding the generic issue of easement baseline documentation, Miller suggested that dialogue with Mattson would be timely.

Page Pond and Forest - Warrant Article Talking Points

Billings distributed a list of the bullets he has prepared for Town Meeting.

The name of the property, "Page Pond Forest," drew comment. Billings explained that the Town does not own the pond (Page Pond being a "great pond"), thus "Page Pond and Forest" would be a misnomer. The Commission let Billings' designation stand.

Miller, explaining that voters will recognize this warrant article will transfer authority from the Town to its Conservation Commission, suggested Billings add a bullet identifying the Commission's lengthy and successful track record with managing/stewarding town forests.

Spear Property/Snake River

Billings informed the Commission that one of the Waukegan shore owners has drafted a conservation easement and submitted said to counsel Lee Mattson for consideration.

Miller urged the Commission to thank this individual for his efforts and to inform him we would take his draft under advisement. Miller expressed alarm about the various parties to this acquisition acting independently of each other. With the Town of New Hampton, the New Hampton Conservation Commission, the Town of Meredith, the Meredith Conservation Commission, the Waukegan Shore Owners Association, and the

Waukegan Watershed Advisory Committee all involved in this land purchase, initiatives must be coordinated or “madness” could ensue. Because the Waukegan Shore Owners will be turning the property over to the Town of New Hampton following purchase, its role is time-limited. The easement language must be crafted by those parties who will be stewarding the land in perpetuity, namely the two towns.

MacFarlane concurred. He reminded the Commission that we had recently resolved to draft an easement for consideration by all parties.

Sherman noted that the SPNHF easement template, “minus 50%” of its content, would serve Snake River adequately.

Timber Harvests

The Town has received two more checks from Shaun Lagueux for the Dockham timber cut in the amounts of \$2015.04 (02/05/2010) and \$1994.51 (02/12/2010).

Town Forest Timber Inventories

MacFarlane informed the Commission that Lagueux will bill the Town at his rate of \$50/hour to inventory or re-inventory the town forests. Lagueux expects that total cost will be in the vicinity of several thousand dollars.

Sherman noted that the Hermit Woods and Piscopo forests should not be inventoried as the recently adopted Vision Statement identifies these lands to be “forever wild”.

Miller noted that Lagueux should start from scratch with the Eames town forest as the existing inventory was not prepared on the Commission’s behalf.

On motion of Miller, seconded by Billings, the Commission voted unanimously to contract with Lagueux to inventory or re-inventory those town forests as identified.

Town Forest Ordinance

Miller summarized the gist of his and Sherman’s last discussion of this subject.

Regarding who has the authority to manage town forests, some statutes give Conservation Commissions such authority, others don’t.

Signage emphasizing positives rather than negatives might accomplish the intent of an ordinance.

Is signage needed at this juncture? Miller noted that the problems which once plagued the Hamlin town forest (partying, motorized wheeled vehicles) have diminished with time. This could be due to increased pedestrian presence. Also, at the Commission’s

request, the Meredith police spoke to the miscreants who were driving unmuffled dirt bikes on the trails.

It was noted that signage can create problems by triggering defiant attitudes or planting ideas where they otherwise might not occur.

Thus, for the new trail systems that will soon be opened in the Page Pond and Meredith Community Forests, the Commission will take a wait-and-see approach, utilizing signage where/if necessary.

MacFarlane officially dissolved the Town Forest Ordinance Committee with thanks to its members.

Smyth Trust Bequest

The Commission has learned that former member Barbara (“Bobby”) Smyth has bequeathed \$10,000 to the Commission to be used for open space acquisitions, both fee simple and easements.

On motion of Sherman, seconded by Billings, the Commission voted unanimously to accept this gift.

The matter now goes to the Selectmen for formal acceptance by the Town.

Member Updates

(1) Sherman – NHACC – Legislative Update

A bill has been introduced in the legislature that would allow for the election of Conservation Commissioners. Currently, all Conservation Commissioners are appointed. The NHACC opposes this bill due to concern that the elective process would deter people from serving and that it would enable developers and others with conflicts of interest to serve.

(2) Miller – Planning for Smyth Easement Trail

Lou Kahn has seen the bronze plaques and finds them “impressive”. He and Miller collaborated on the text, font, layout, etc.

Kahn and MacFarlane went on site recently and found that the timber harvest has not impacted the proposed trail at all. With Kahn’s approval, this trail will be cleared, signed, and blazed in late April, and plaques mounted then, too. There is no need to erect a bridge across the one stream. Kahn would prefer that granite slabs be positioned for rock-hopping.

A new map incorporating the trail must be readied for public use. The final steps will be to post a display about the easement at the kiosk and install the roadside sign. An informal ceremony at the parking area and a walk through the easement property will bring matters to delightful closure.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Miller
Secretary