

SELECTMEN'S WORKSHOP
Minutes of 06-1-09
4:00 p.m.

Selectmen:

Peter F. Brothers, Chairman
Miller C. Lovett, Vice Chairman
Robert C. Flanders
Charles G. Palm
Colette Worsman

Co-Interim Town Managers:

John C. Edgar
Brenda L. Vittner

Recording Clerk:

Karin Landry

Call to Order: Chairman Peter Brothers called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. He introduced the Board, Co-Interim Town Managers, and the Recording Clerk.

W 09-27 **Smyth/Kahn Easement Discussion**

Co-Interim Town Manager John Edgar introduced the matter. Prior to her passing, Bobby Smyth expressed her desire to donate a conservation easement on land owned by Bobby and her husband Lou Kahn. The Board of Selectmen and the Conservation Commission recently confirmed their agreement-in-principle to pursue the donation. Mr. Edgar used visual aids to identify the location of the 150 acre property. The property lies adjacent to the Hamlin and Eames Town Forests, and a 60-acre parcel that was previously donated by Mr. Kahn. The land consists of two lots of record:

- Tax Map R-19, Lot 1, 131 acres, undeveloped, in current use; and
- Tax Map R-19, Lot 13, 19 acres, developed with a single family dwelling, balance in current use.

The easement is subject to two deed reservations:

- In order to provide for the potential relocation or replacement of the existing dwelling on Lot 13, 1.94 acres are not subject to the easement; and
- A reservation providing for the potential creation of not more than two additional lots on Lot 1(subject to the required approvals). Each of the potential lots would include not more than three acres that would then be excluded from the easement, should the reservation be implemented.

Accordingly, the total acreage subject to the easement at the outset will be 148 acres, and would not be less than 142 acres if/when the Lot 1 reservation is implemented. At this time, Mr. Kahn and his heirs have no intent to exercise the reservation on Lot 1.

The benefits of granting the easement include:

- Public Benefit. The easement expressly provides for a publically accessible hiking trail that would connect the existing trail system in the Eames Town Forest to the existing trail system in the Hamlin Town Forest. The details of the trail interconnecting the two properties will be finalized between Mr. Kahn and the Conservation Commission.
- Environmental Benefit. The easement provides for environmental benefits that include the protection of two major watersheds above Lake Wicwas and Pemigewasset Lake.
- Scenic Benefit. The easement does not allow for the potential development of a maximum of 14-15 homes.

The draft Deed has been reviewed by representatives of the Conservation Commission including Chair Don MacFarlane, John Sherman, and Ralph Pisapia. It was also reviewed by Attorney Lee Mattson on behalf of the Town. A corrective discharge of mortgage has been executed and changes have been incorporated into the final draft, in accordance with Attorney Mattson's recommendations.

The proposed easement will be donated to the Town of Meredith. The monetary value associated with the 148 acre donated easement has not been determined. Assessor Jim Commerford advised that the two properties are in current use, therefore the placement of the easement would not have a significant impact on the tax base. The Town will absorb the costs associated with the legal review and recording of the easement in the approximate amount of \$2,750. The Conservation Commission will assume stewardship responsibilities for the property.

Mr. Kahn told the Board that he and Bobby originally acquired the property to protect it from what appeared to be eminent clear cutting that would eventually lead to the development of the property. The Town of Meredith is dear to Bobby and Lou's hearts, and it was Bobby's wish to give this gift to the Town. The Chair expressed his deep appreciation for the generous gift that will have a significant impact on the future in terms of the use of existing conservation properties. He expressed regrets that the acceptance of the easement was not acted upon before Bobby's passing.

John Sherman reiterated that the property has immense value in terms of conservation. The Commission is delighted that the easement will provide for the creation of a loop trail through the whole area. Commission member Peter Miller is delighted with every aspect of the conservation of the property.

Selectman Lovett inquired about the size of the Smythe easement combined with the existing surrounding easements. The total of said easements is approximately 700 acres. The next largest conservation easement is Page Pond, at approximately 600 acres.

Selectman Worsman thanked Lou and Bobby for their generous gift to the community that will be appreciated for many generations to come.

The Chair thanked Mr. Edgar for his efforts on the matter. Once hired, the Town Manager will oversee the matter going forward.

The matter will be acted upon at the Board meeting following the workshop.

Belknap County Conservation District:

John Hodsdson of the Belknap County Conservation District asked the Board to support agriculture in the State of New Hampshire at the presentation that will be made by the Belknap County Commissioners following the workshop. Agriculture is important to the county for the food it produces, protection of water supplies, forestry, and the tourist industry. The Chair told Mr. Hodsdson that he will have an opportunity to express his concerns regarding the funding of the District at the conclusion of the Commissioner's presentation, and that those concerns are best expressed from someone like himself.

Selectman Lovett inquired about the Conservations District's budget. The county's contribution to the budget is \$90,000 - \$100,000. Other sources of income, including fundraising, bring the total budget to approximately \$230,000.

Mr. Hodsdson reviewed various projects that the District has worked on with the Town of Meredith, including conservation easements, watershed projects, engineering advice, and the public gardens on Parade Rd.

Selectman Worsman inquired about other programs at the state, county, and community level that compete for the same funds as the District. Mr. Hodgson told her that the District is primarily a conduit for technical advice relating to soil conservation and water conservation, particularly water quality concerns, because of their partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, formerly known as the Soil Conservation Service. The Conservation Service is part of the Department of Agriculture, and is funded at the federal level. The District has also worked with the Conservation Commission on various matters.

BATCHELDER HILL RD. PROJECT

Co-Interim Town Manager Brenda Vittner reported that the project is well underway. Phase I of the project is scheduled for paving on Wednesday or Thursday of this week. Ambrose Brothers will begin work on Phase II next week. An update on the project has been added to the Co-Town Manager's weekly message.

Selectman Worsman inquired why the lower section of the road is well demarcated with the road boundaries, but the demarcation stops at the point where Roxbury becomes Batchelder Hill Rd. Mr. Edgar suspects that the change identifies the phase breaks in the project. He will follow up on the matter with Director of Public Works Mike Faller.

Selectman Palm reminded the Co-Interim Town Managers that the Board is very interested in seeing the detailed accounting of time and equipment on the project.

SCHOOL BOARD BUDGET

Selectman Worsman inquired if the Board would support sending a general letter to the School Board asking if they will consider using surplus funds, generated in part from the award of stimulus money, back to the taxpayers in the form of a reduction in the general tax rate. The Board agrees that they have an interest in maintaining a total level tax rate. Dialogue ensued regarding the level of communication between the two Boards. The Selectman support a working dialogue with the School Board as they move forward with the 2010 budgets.

The Board generally agreed to the concept of sending a letter to the School Board.

Selectman Palm motioned to adjourn the meeting at 5:15 p.m. Seconded by Selectman Lovett.

5-0. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

John C. Edgar, Co-Interim Town Mgr.

Peter F. Brothers, Chairman

Brenda L. Vittner, Co-Interim Town Mgr.

Miller C. Lovett, Vice Chairman

Karin Landry, Recording Clerk

Robert C. Flanders

Charles G. Palm

Colette Worsman