

Town File

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
MEETING  
June 10, 2019**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Allan Ryder, Bob Elwell, Kim Votta, Allan Carr, John Accardi and Rob Christie.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Selectmen's Rep Leon Rideout.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Ben Oleson, Julie Evans.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Chairman John Accardi.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**APPOINTMENTS:** Julie Evans, Program Director for the Northern Forest Center.

Ms Evans provided a brief overview of what the Northern Forest Center (NFC) is and does and what her job involves. She said NFC is a non-profit organization based in Concord and that her office is in Milan. She explained that Lancaster's town forest consists of 260 acres and does not have a lot of community use. She said it is used mostly by the abutters to the property. Ms Evans said a deterrent to its use is that it does not have welcoming entrances. Ms Evans said she was invited to this meeting by Mr Oleson to offer to facilitate a community discussion on how to better use the town forest. She said the discussion would help to determine how the community would like to use the town forest and what its potential is. Ms Evans said the Conservation Commission would be the host for the community discussion. She said she would take care of all the details which would include a press release.

J Accardi stated that he felt it is a great idea.

B Elwell asked what would happen after the discussion.

Ms Evans said that the forest would be looked at, there would be an investigation to see if it would make sense to purchase any surrounding forest land, then negotiate with sellers and fundraise (federal and state sources and private funds).

The goals of the community discussion would be first informational (history of town forest etc.) and the community would be asked what they would like to see in the town forest.

R Christie asked what the cost would be if, for example, the town forest was enlarged to 1000 acres. Ms Evans said it could be in excess of a million dollars.

Mr Oleson noted that we need to find out what the public wants and then decide on a plan. He said we need to start a discussion. Mr Oleson said hosting a community engagement meeting would demonstrate that the Conservation Commission is active in the town and doing something.

R Christie said that the Conservation Commission has a lot to work on. Mr Oleson said that if the commission does not want to host the discussion he can have someone else host it, the Planning Board, for example.

It was stated that Ms Evans time is being paid for by a \$12000 grant that the Town of Lancaster received.

Moved by R Christie and seconded by B Elwell to defer the decision on the community discussion until the July meeting

Motion carried.

### **REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Moved by R Christie and seconded by J Accardi to approve the minutes of the May 13, 2019 meeting.

Motion carried.

### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Balance as of May 13, 2019 - \$4482.30

Expenses for the month - \$1227.66

Proposed expense (Town Forest – stewardship plan) - \$2800.00

Ending Balance - \$454.64

Mr Oleson explained that at a Conservation Commission meeting in 2017 he informed members about what was going on regarding the town forest. Unfortunately there are no meeting minutes. He said the budget prepared by the town for the Conservation Commission included the stewardship plan.

B Elwell stated that he remembers that there was a discussion about the scope of the work.

K Votta provided an agenda from the April 2018 meeting with her notes stating that the scope and the fee of \$2800 was discussed.

R Christie read from an RSA which says that revenue from the town forest should go into a separate maintenance fund for the town forest with the Conservation Commission managing that trust fund.

B Elwell stated that the commission needs to re-establish the proper role of the Conservation Commission and then move on from there.

K Votta said that if the Conservation Commission oversees the town forest and manages the town forest funds, how do they do it? Open a dialog with the selectmen?

J Accardi noted that the commission is an advisory group to the selectboard. Page 2 – Conservation Commission 6/10/19 .

The commission can make recommendations to the selectboard.

R Christie suggested, in moving forward, that the committee spend the rest of the year looking at what the business of the Conservation Commission is. A topic will be chosen for a 10 -15 minute discussion at each meeting. Figure out what the committee can do and to set goals and priorities.

### **CALENDAR/PLANNING CYCLE**

Moved by R Christie and seconded by K Votta that the committee develop a study plan and pick topics to devote 10-15 minutes to each meeting.

Motion carried

### **NEW BUSINESS**

- Town Master Plan Committee representative – The committee will meet once a month for about 1 year.

Moved by R Christie and seconded by B Elwell to appoint K Votta the Conservation Commission's representative to the Master Plan Committee.

Motion carried.

- DOT matters – none
- Member contact info – now have all member contact info.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

- Conservation Commission Rules of Procedure – B Oleson offered to provide a draft copy (template) within a week for discussion at the next meeting. He will email it to K Votta for review first.
- Town Easements Monitoring – R Christie drafted a letter to be sent to the property owners advising them that the Conservation Commission will be making a visit to the property. The letter was emailed to each committee member for their review. There are 4 easements that need to be inspected. Committee members were fine with the letter and it will be mailed to the property owners. Committee members need to get familiar with the stewardship plans before the inspections.

Moved by A Ryder and seconded by B Elwell to approve the payment of \$2800 to Greg Ainsworth for the Forest Stewardship Plan.

Motion carried.

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Moved by A Ryder and seconded by B Elwell to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried – meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Jean Oleson

Approved:

Secretary

John Accardi, Chairman

