

Town of Newington, NH

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes, Thursday, May 11, 2023

- Call to Order:** Chair Jane Hislop called the May 11, 2023, meeting at 6:30 PM
- Present:** Commissioners Laura Rogers and Jim Weiner; Alternate Jane Kendall; and Town Planner, John Krebs
- Absent:** Vice-Chair Derick Willson; Andrew Meigs; Alternate Member, Bill Murray
- Public Guests:** Beth Dermody with Allen and Major Associates, Inc; Mike Metzger; Constantine Rotetski

1) Landscape Plans: Fox Point Restoration

Beth Dermody with Allen and Major Associates, Inc. appeared before the Conservation Commission to present a restoration plan to replace the trees and vegetation removed from the City of Portsmouth's construction to replace the water main under Great Bay through Fox Point.

Commissioner Jim Weiner asked who hired Allen and Major Associates, Inc. for the work. Ms. Dermody replied that they were hired by the Town of Newington.

Town Planner, John Krebs informed the Commissioners that the newly created Conservation Trust Fund could be used for work at Fox Point.

Ms. Dermody said that she had reviewed the placement of the 40-foot deep and 70-foot-long water line easement for planting placement. Ms. Dermody said Portsmouth Water Department was taking down some large trees, and they intended to replace some of the species that were being removed such as Juniperus red cedar, maple, a couple of oaks, paper birch, and some other natives like scrub pine, and flowering species like bayberry, service berries, and winterberry shrubs that wouldn't get too large over the new water line easement should Portsmouth Water Department need access.

Commissioner Weiner commented that the Conservation Commission only approved the Portsmouth Water Department in March to go to the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES), but DES hadn't approved the plans yet. Commissioner Weiner said they were waiting to find out if the line would be going along the road, or the center of the field. Commissioner Weiner went on to say that Ms. Dermody was to present a landscape plan to anchor the shoreline, but anything else beyond her scope.

Commissioner Weiner asked if the City of Portsmouth Water Department had provided any feedback on trees over the water line, as they had initially said they didn't want any trees planted there. Ms. Dermody replied that the pipe would be around 16

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feet deep, and they were intending on planting the low growing shrubs that could easily be replaced nearer the pipeline, and keep the taller trees further back.

Mr. Krebs agreed that they needed to stabilize the shoreline, and the Portsmouth Water Department wouldn't want trees over the water line, but the trees could be to the side. Mr. Krebs added that the last water line was installed in 1953, and they wouldn't need to maintain it again for as many years, and the life of the trees.

Commissioner Weiner commented that he had lost several tall pines near his house along the shore of Great Bay in the last 14 years, and said they need to take high winds into account when selecting trees. Commissioner Weiner went on to say that rose rugosa had large root systems, and were known to good shoreline stabilization.

Chair Hislop recommended low growing native blueberries.

In reviewing the suggested species planting list, Chair Hislop asked if beech plum survived this far north. Ms. Dermody replied that it was used in parking lots.

Chair Hislop commented that her redbuds couldn't handle snow, and pussy willow were famous for seeking water, and the larger trees were susceptible to splitting from wind damage.

Chair Hislop said bank stabilization and wind tolerance would be a priority.

Ms. Dermody said there were a lot of red oaks on the list, but they could be planted to the side. Commissioner Weiner said size was not the only issue, but the question was how the line of site looks from large down to smaller. Ms. Dermody agreed that would give the larger trees room to grow over the years.

Commissioner Weiner asked about pear trees. Ms. Dermody said the Bradford pear has become invasive. Chair Hislop added that other pear trees split.

Chair Hislop also recommended that they not plant apples with cedar, or spruce that contaminated blueberries with witch's brook spores.

Chair Hislop said that ash was getting hit hard by the emerald ash borer, so they needed to avoid monocultures that could be susceptible to target attacks.

Mr. Krebs said might be helpful to see a revised plan before recommending it to the Board of Selectmen. Commissioner Weiner added that he would like to see how it would look from the field when fully grown.

Chair Hislop asked if the soil would be staying on site as there was a concern with bringing invasives in. Mr. Krebs responded that there was an ordinance that topsoil couldn't be removed from excavation sites. Ms. Dermody said they would only be bringing in a topsoil for seeding, a native meadow mix of wildflowers for erosion control.

Ms. Dermody noted that the engineering plans showed riprap along the shore.

Commissioner Weiner talked about watering bags. Mr. Krebs said it would probably be easier to put up temporary irrigation because of the difficulty getting water and manpower to fill watering bladders. Commissioner Weiner added that they needed to be sure to set up drip irrigation and not that could spread mildew diseases.

Commissioner Weiner asked if Ms. Dermody knew of a company that got rid of invasives. Ms. Dermody said landscapers could address invasives by hand digging, or cutting and spot poisoning. Ms. Dermody said there weren't a lot of invasives like buckthorn, bittersweet, and multiflora rose in that section of the site, and planting in the open sun would also prevent new invasives from seeding in.

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2) Summer 2023 Initiatives Discussion

This item was delayed to discuss the next item first.

3) Fox Point Invasives

Mr. Krebs informed the Commission that Town Administrator, Martha Roy had sent an email saying that the Commission could use the new Conservation Fund monies for control of invasives on Fox Point. Mr. Krebs said it would be a good idea to put feelers out as to what company could do the work.

Commissioner Weiner commented that Board of Selectmen's Chair, Bob Blonigan had recommended that the Commission wait until after the Portsmouth Water Department finishes restoring the area of disturbance from the new water main on Fox Point first. Mr. Krebs responded that the Commission's work wouldn't touch the area where the Portsmouth Water Department was working, so there was no need to wait another year to do a section at a time now that there were funds.

Commissioner Weiner commented that it was an extensive project with a lot of hand labor.

Commissioner Laura Rogers said she had a local company use a mulching machine on their property last year for \$3,500 over both sides of a six-acre rectangle. Commissioner Rogers said they could clear up to tree line first in half a day on Fox Point. Commissioner Rogers said they could do the work every other year over several seasons, and they could also keep the invasives in check by mowing.

Mr. Krebs said it would be good to start in a place in public view first, adding that the Commission and the town needed to commit to ongoing maintenance.

Chair Hislop wondered if it would be helpful to have manpower and equipment for maintenance. Commissioner Weiner responded that maintenance was not a strong suit of the Town, so it would be better to job the work out.

Mr. Krebs said he would arrange a meeting, and ask for an estimate of how much could be accomplished.

Chair Hislop said she had talked with Langdon Library Director Lara Berry who told her that there was availability for the Conservation Commission to host a community education event from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Thursday, June 8; Tuesday, June 13, or June 20. Chair Hislop said she thought the best would be June 13, 2023.

Chair Hislop said 30 people usually attended these events, and Ms. Berry told her that they could also host the talk outside if the weather was nice.

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Chair Hislop said she had talked to University of New Hampshire Professor Grizzle about a discussion on oyster farming in Great Bay, and he said he would get back to her on his availability.

Chair Hislop said they could also host another event in August or September. Mr. Krebs recommended August before school began, and while it was still warm out.

Commissioner Weiner said he would give a wildlife contact a call about giving a discussion on coyotes.

4) Other Business and Discussions:

Mr. Krebs introduced Newington residents, Mike Metzger and Constantine Rotetski who were observing the meeting at Laura Rogers invitation to see if they might want to join the Commission. Mr. Krebs said the Commission's primary statutory responsibility was to review and make recommendations on DES permits for wetlands impact, the dredging and filling wetlands, or shoreline impacts.

Mr. Krebs said the Commission also reviews development landscape plans, oversees townwide conservation, including open space conservation easements, and community conservation education.

Mr. Krebs said members usually met the second Thursday of each month, and tended to pull together in the same direction with little controversy.

Commissioner Weiner recommended that the Town get a forester for Fox Point to make recommendations for the health of trees.

Commissioner Weiner went on to say that the Town Forest was mostly a monoculture of white pine that was planted years ago, and an arborist that he spoke with recommended that they clear cut section by section to allow more diversity.

Mr. Krebs agreed that clear cutting had been successful in maintaining the health of the White Mountain National Forest. Mr. Krebs added that his hometown of Freedom enlisted a town forester to manage their 2,600 acres.

Chair Hislop commented that many of the foresters in the state only serviced the north country, or had retired, and most all of the University of New Hampshire (UNH) forestry professors had retired, so the continuance of the program was uncertain.

Commissioner Rogers asked if anyone at the Urban Forestry Center in Portsmouth might be able to make a recommendation. Chair Hislop added that the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF) in Concord might also be able to make a recommendation.

Mr. Krebs said he would call the Urban Forestry Center and SPNHF to see if they could make a recommendation, as well as Duane Hyde with Southeast Land Trust. Chair Hislop said Town wetlands consultant, Mark West with West Environmental might know of someone as well.

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Chair Hislop expressed concern that the Town Transfer Station was no longer collecting glass for recycling. Commissioner Weiner responded that the recycling company they used were now charging by weight, and were throwing the glass into a pile, so it was cheaper to throw the glass into the landfill.

Mr. Krebs said the residents in his town still wanted to take their glass to the transfer station, so they might want to ask the Board of Selectmen why they were no longer recycling. Mr. Metzger commented that glass never really got recycled into new glass, but was instead ground up, and added to asphalt.

Commissioner Weiner asked about the possibility of a renewable energy plant in Newington. Mr. Krebs responded that he had attended two meetings with representatives of the Sprague company that was trying to respond to the changing fuel market, and were considering a facility that would turn restaurant waste into methane, but it was only something they were considering.

Minutes: *Commissioner Weiner moved to approve the April 13, 2023, Minutes. Laura Rogers seconded, and all were in favor.*

Adjournment: *Chair Hislop moved to adjourn. Mr. Krebs seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.*

Next Meeting: Thursday, June 13, 2023

**Respectfully
Submitted by:** Jane K. Kendall, Recording Secretary

These Minutes were approved and adopted by the Conservation Commission at their August 10, 2023, meeting.