

Town of Newington, NH
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes for Thursday, July 10, 2014

Call to Order: Chair, Jane Hislop called the July 10, 2014 meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Present: Chair, Jane Hislop; Jane Kendall; Ann Morton; Bill Murray

Absent: Nancy Cauvet and Jim Weiner

Public Guests: Julia Peterson and Jill Ferrell with Natural Resources Outreach Coalition;

1) Community Education: NH Sea Grant and UNH Cooperative Extension

Ms. Julia Peterson and Ms. Jill Ferrell with Natural Resources Outreach Coalition returned for a continuation of their workshops on community education.

Ms. Peterson said nitrogen and phosphorus nutrient overloads were the two primary pollutants to bodies of water such as Great Bay from septage, though bacterial pathogens could be a problem in some other areas at times. She said these pollutants were causing environmental health problems for marine life, an economic impact for fishing industries as a result of the declining marine populations and consumer health problems from consumption of tainted aquatic food sources like shellfish.

Ms. Peterson said 29% of all non-point source nitrogen pollution into Great Bay had been identified as coming from septic systems and 99% of the households in Newington were identified as using private septic systems. Chair Hislop said sewerage that went to the wastewater treatment plant was primarily reserved for the commercial area along Woodbury Avenue and the industrial area along Shattuck Way. She said there had been discussions about expanding the coverage of town sewage service, but there was concern for increased costs to the infrastructure as well as shrinking the residential two-acre minimum lot coverage required. She added that Newington accepted septic disposal at the wastewater treatment plant and had been a leader in the Great Bay area to work toward upgrading their wastewater treatment.

Ms. Ferrell said studies showed that 100% of the septic systems within 250 feet of a body of water leached nitrogen into the soils, the water tables and into nearby bodies of water. Ms. Peterson said it was very difficult to eliminate the leaching of nitrogen from septic systems completely, but there were things that could be done to improve septic use and to reduce septic failures, and that was where community education was helpful. Ms. Ferrell agreed that there was no silver bullet to eliminate nitrogen completely, which was a naturally occurring nutrient that was also in the air, and came from fertilizer runoff, wildlife, and other point sources such as wastewater, but informing residents on improving the functioning of their septic systems was the first line of defense.

Ms. Ferrell reviewed responses to educational outreach in other communities and provided an example of a septic system record keeping and informational folder put

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out by Granite State Designers and Installers at a cost of 40 cents for members and 80 cents for non-members. She said most residents were more willing to discuss issues regarding their septic systems during private meetings in their homes and most residents were supportive when they realized the effects it would have on their local body of water. Some of the suggestions for reducing pollution from septic systems were to eliminate the use of bleaches and other chemicals, which killed beneficial bacteria, and to use water efficient dishwashers, showerheads and washing machines, unnecessary toilet flushing, not using waste disposals, and frequent pumping. Commissioner Bill Murray said he pumped his tank nearly twice a year and thought it was cheap insurance to preserve the life of a leach field. Discussions ensued over providing residents with a list of local septic companies, coupon or discount incentives, but a concern over a conflict of interest was brought up considering one of the current selectmen ran a septic construction company. Ms. Peterson suggested listing Granite State Designers and Installers at <http://www.gsdi.org/> as a third party.

Ms. Ferrell discussed de-nitrifying septic system technologies and the possibility of new developments and older systems being replaced with the new technologies. She acknowledged that the anaerobic, de-nitrifying systems were often twice the price of traditional septic systems, but that they did a better job and had a longer lifespan. Ms. Peterson said Mr. George Loomis with the University of Rhode Island was working on new technologies and asked if older systems could be retrofitted with the new technology to be more effective. Ms. Ferrell said she was not sure.

Ms. Ferrell recommended following a multi-tiered approach to community education, similar to what was listed on the <http://www.thinkbluemaine.org> septic page. Commissioners agreed that the best approaches to reaching audiences would be a broad distribution with a simple message through informational distribution at the Town Hall, library, school, boat launches, public areas along Great Bay, local events, as well as mailings to residents, the Department of Public Works, shell fishermen and postings on the Town website. Ms. Peterson the second tier involve confidential meetings and site visits with residents to identify potential problem areas, provide information and discuss incentives. She recommended a couple of financial assistance opportunities for low income residents with failing systems, one being a senior citizen revolving fund with 20% forgiveness, as well as USDA Rural Development Loans. She added that there was an increasing awareness of nitrogen pollution and thought there would be more interest and support at the State and Federal levels, with local communities being encouraged to take the lead. Ms. Peterson said the final tier would be to consider regulatory responses.

Commissioner Jane Kendall suggested that wastewater from households that were further inland from the shore could be just as critical to the health of Great Bay considering that many were close to streams and storm water runoff that led to the Bay and some households might still have gray water systems that eventually drained into these streams. She said for this reason she thought that households within 250' of the Bay should not be the only households in town to be considered.

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Ms. Peterson said she could return to work with the commission on Thursday, August 14, 2014 and Ms. Ferrell said she could return on Thursday, September 11, 2014.

2) Old Business

A) Baird property conservation easement

Chair Hislop said Dave Hislop of Knight's Surveying discovered some discrepancies in the boundary lines that were slightly off while surveying that required an adjustment. She said Southeast Land Trust was also working on designating the access point before the Board of Selectmen could schedule a public hearing to request the Conservation Funds be transferred for the purchase of the easement.

B) Fox Point Easement

Chair Hislop said Attorney F.X. Bruton and former Commission chair, Justin Richardson were still discussing the language of the easement.

C) Langdon Library Rain Garden

Chair Hislop said plantings in the rain garden had been done recently.

Minutes: Ann Morton moved to approve the Minutes for the June 5 2014 meeting with one correction. Jane Hislop seconded, and all were in favor.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Next Meeting: Thursday, August 14, 2014

Respectfully
Submitted by: Jane K. Kendall, Recording Secretary