

Town of Newington, NH
CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes for Thursday, June 11, 2015

- Call to Order:** Chair, Jane Hislop called the June 11, 2015 meeting at 6:30 p.m.
- Present:** Chair, Jane Hislop; Co-Chair Jim Weiner; Ann Morton; Bill Murray; Alternate Jane Kendall
- Absent:** Sandy Devins; Thomas Morgan, Town Planner
- Public Guests:** Tim Stone with Stonehill Environmental

1) Town Forest Dump: Report by Stonehill Environmental

Mr. Tim Stone with Stonehill Environmental introduced himself to the Commission, stating that he had worked with soil and water contamination issues for 35 years.

Mr. Stone passed out GIS maps showing the main dump area, which approximately covered an acre, noting that he had observed a wide distribution of glass, rusty old drums and barbed wire, and other debris along the trails. He wondered why so many drums were dumped there and Chair Hislop replied that many farms kept their own drums of gasoline on the farms for their tractors in the 1940's and 1950's so that could have been the case. Mr. Stone said they would also want to know if any of the old drums contained. He said dumping waste oil was common back then, though petroleum contaminants degrade, but drums with pesticides that were used in fields were more of a concern. Chair Hislop replied that much of the dump was probably from old farms that had been closed when Pease Air Force Base took over the area.

Mr. Stone said the Department of Environmental Services (DES) usually did not concern itself with small dumps at the back of old farms; however, this dump was more significant. He said although regulation of landfills was required after solid waste regulations changed in 1981, this dump was established prior to that date so DES didn't have the authority to regulate it unless it was determined that there was a danger or human health impact, such as ground water that was in the public trust.

Mr. Stone said he spoke with Mr. Doug Kemp in the Solid Waste Bureau at DES who said he would like to see a Phase 1 report that included interviews, public records, and old photos submitted with the questionnaire that he passed out to put the facility on the DES radar. He said he understood that the name, owner, and history might be uncertain, but they could interview local people for their recollections about household waste that could have been dumped. Chair Hislop said Historic Commission Chair Gale Pare might have old names of families that lived in the area. She said some residents, such as John Frink, Gupta Knox, the Pickerings or Dick Spinney had relatives that were longtime residents and they might have recollections of the kinds of things that went into the dump. Mr. Stone said they could pass the names on to him to arrange interviews.

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Mr. Stone said open burning was common in old dumps and ash was a contaminant, but it was usually exempt if it only resulted from wood burning. He said it was not as common to find signs of burning in forests except that this was a dump so they might find traces of polycarbonate, but that was common even in downtown Portsmouth where people used to throw burnt coal ashes out.

He said assuming everything was benign; the main interest would be to remove anything visible and then cover the remaining area to protect anyone from injury. Chair Hislop said the Recreation Committee had considered using the trails. Mr. Stone said there were big spools of barbed wire that could be dangerous. He said the concrete might be taken away as construction and demolition debris, and since there was a lot of glass, they could sort and recycle some of the debris, but the rusted metal probably could not be recycled. Commissioner Bill Murray asked where they would put the sorted material and Mr. Stone suggested making arrangements with the Town recycling station and then consolidating, crushing and covering the remainder.

Commissioner Murray asked how far down they would need to dig and Mr. Stone replied that they wouldn't know how far down the debris was until they excavated, but it could be 5' down in the center. He said Mr. Kemp said it could be a big effort because as they pulled things out, something else might come with it.

Commissioner Murray asked how much it would cost to haul the material away and Mr. Stone said it typically cost \$60 per yard and there were at least 5000 yards visible, so he estimated that covering the dump might only cost \$2,000, but he couldn't say for certain how deep it went and they would need to be sure that this was the only dump so suggested that they inventory of entire forest to be sure. Chair Hislop said they might ask Eversource to mitigate their transmission line project with this project.

Mr. Stone said an excavator would be cheaper than transporting out. Co-Chair Weiner wondered if they could use Town resources to excavate and Mr. Stone said they could, but they should do test pits and collect a soil sample to be sure there were no contaminants. He said he would be more comfortable using an excavator than person. Mr. Stone said they could consolidate and bury the waste with clean fill or they could do something innovative like digging a hole, disposing of the waste in the hole and then use the material from the hole to cover the debris so long as they were sure the waste wouldn't leach into the water table after they did test pits down to the water table and was approved by DES. Chair Hislop said monitoring wells were already in the Town Forest after Pease Air Force Base was closed. Mr. Stone said chlorinated water had more suspected carcinogens than the contaminants from Pease.

Chair Hislop suggested talking with other groups in town like the Board of Selectmen and the Recreation Committee to see if they could come up with a crew to survey the forest. She asked Mr. Stone if he could direct the survey and Mr. Stone said he could or they could utilize someone who knew the forest to survey and catalog their findings in a few Saturday afternoons. Chair Hislop said the entire forest was around 30 acres and perhaps Town wetlands consultant, Mark West had done a wetlands survey and could determine if they needed to survey around the main dump or the entire forest. Mr. Stone said it would be ideal to go out before the undergrowth grew up, especially when the Japanese knotweed was the heaviest. Co-Chair Weiner asked if it was an

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easy area to get to and Mr. Stone said it was a big area, at least an acre down an old road.

Commissioner Ann Morton asked if the Air Force used the Town Forest and dump and Chair Hislop said the Air Force managed the forest for the entire time they occupied the area. She said it was possible that the Air Force rolled up the old farm fields and dumped them there when they constructed the base, but no one knows for certain. She said the Town tried to get the Air Force to clean up when they transferred land back to the Town, but the Air Force showed photos of the dump area from the late 1940's, prior to their occupation. She said the Air Force took over between 1954 and 1955 and the Town transferred their trash to Portsmouth until 1979.

Minutes: *Co-Chair Weiner moved to approve the Minutes for the May 21, 2015 meeting. Bill Murray seconded and all were in favor.*

Announcements and Discussions:

Chair Hislop reviewed the budget. She said \$500 that was spent on beautification wasn't showing on the budget. Co-Chair Weiner said he spoke with the Board of Selectmen and it was his understanding that the Commission would pay \$500 toward beautification and the Town would pay the remainder.

Chair Hislop said she attended a celebration of the Southeast Land Trust and the Town and the Bairds received a commemorative plaque for the Baird conservation easement.

She said she also spoke with the chair of the Plaistow Conservation Commission and discussed how they put their town forest into conservation. Co-Chair Weiner said he thought that was a great idea to protect it into perpetuity as they hoped to do with Fox Point.

Chair Hislop said Jill Ferrell with PREP and NROC sent information on shared New England priorities for the Shorelines grant that was due August 5, 2015

Chair Hislop said Sarah Allen with Normandeau Associates was supposed to attend the last meeting to discuss mitigation for Eversource's transmission line project, but had not appeared. She said Town Planner, Tom Morgan had finally got ahold of her, but was told she did not have authority to attend a public meeting.

Chair Hislop said there were several projects including the potential land purchase. Commissioner Jane Kendall asked how much money or how many acres would be offered. Chair Hislop there was a fair amount of wetlands in the Town Forest, but wildlife habitat would also be appropriate.

Co-Chair Weiner said the Planning Board had discussions on Eversource's transmission line route and it was unlikely that it would go through Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

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Co-Chair Weiner announced that he had invited Dori Wiggin and David Price from DES to attend their meeting on the second Thursday of September 2015 to help commissioners better understand their process in reviewing wetlands permits.

Co-Chair Weiner said he had researched the cost of recycling bins as low as \$14, but he thought they might ask the Board of Selectmen to ask local industry to contribute. Chair Hislop said there were 350 residents in town. She said residents used to buy their own recycling bins.

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

Next Meeting: Thursday, July 16, 2015

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