

Town of Newington, NH

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes for Thursday, November 12, 2015

- Call to Order:** Chair, Jane Hislop called the November 12, 2015 meeting at 6:30 p.m.
- Present:** Chair, Jane Hislop; Co-Chair Jim Weiner; Commissioners Sandy Devins; Ann Morton; Bill Murray; Alternates Cindy Gunn and Jane Kendall
- Absent:** Town Planner, Thomas Morgan
- Public Guests:** Tracy Degnan with Rockingham County Conservation District

1) **Eversource Mitigation for impact of proposed transmission lines**

Chair Hislop said Sarah Allen, Senior Principal Wetland Scientist for Normandeau Associates who was representing Eversource, sent an email response regarding the Conservation Commission's mitigation proposal to clean up the dump in the Town Forest, stating that the assessment was still in the early stages and the cost and the scope of the project were still unknown and would therefore, not be a likely candidate.

Chair Hebert said the next proposal was to add on to the wildlife corridor along Knight's Brook. She said she spoke with John and Meg Ripley about putting a portion of their property into a conservation easement, but they were concerned they could lose current use if they put it in an easement.

Tracy Degnan with Rockingham Country Conservation District (RCCD) said John Ripley had been corresponding with the Department of Transportation (DOT) and them off and on since 2010 . Chair Hislop said DOT the former Saba family property on the corner of Fox Point Road and Old Post Road and the Hislop family property into a conservation easement and she was hoping they could connect the Ripley's property to extend the corridor. Ms. Degnan said the Ripley's talked about 10 acres of wetlands, but she did not have an updated map to show which parcels were protected and was looking for an overlay of wetlands.

Ms. Degnan said she had worked on the Frink Farm easement with the Commission in the past and other communities, to assist obtaining easement funds, especially for wetlands. She said the Aquatic Resources Mitigation fund and other regional pools of money were very competitive in the Seacoast, but there were other Natural Resource Conservation funds (NRCF) and funds for Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE) under the Farm Bill that she could look into as well. She said the NRCF was an easement program that would be the easement holder into perpetuity. She said they had an eye for restoration opportunities that were tied to other protected properties and habitat areas. She said their criteria used a geographical area rate conversion called GARC using county and community tiers, as well as physical characteristics, access and developability. She said their contribution was a lump sum

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of \$3,800 per acre. She said the application deadline was in the middle of January 2016 and there was a lot of paperwork involved in the application that included adjusted gross income requirements. She said Wetlands Reserve Easement funds were another possibility too.

Co-Chair Jim Weiner asked if the application information would become disclosed in the public record and Ms. Degnan replied that the information would go to NRCS to determine eligibility, but no one else would see it. She said RCCD would hire an appraiser if the value of the property was estimated over \$750,000. Chair Hislop said she thought the Conservation Commission ended up paying for the Frink Farm easement because the first appraisal sat too long. Ms. Degnan said they also had to do a warrant article before Town Meeting.

Ms. Degnan said she also reached out to Laurie Summer who manages A.R.M funding with DES, but she didn't know how the mitigation fund worked. Chair Hislop said Eversource was told that they could put funds into the A.R.M pot for competitive applications. Ms. Degnan said she thought they got more points when the proposed parcel was adjacent to other easements.

Commissioner Bill Murray asked what other private properties in town had been put into conservation easements. Chair Hislop said the Bairds, the Frinks, and the Hislops properties were some examples, but there were other parcels such as Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge and the Beals track on Fabyan Point that had been turned over to U.S. Fish and Wildlife, the Beane property that had been turned over to New Hampshire Fish and Game, while the Saba property and Trickey's Cove were Town owned. She said the Flynn Pit, Fox Point the Town Forest were also Town owned, but were not in conservation. Ms. Degnan said the issue was that conservation easements couldn't legally be held by the Town on Town owned properties due to a conflict of interest.

Ms. Degnan said the Commission should see if other property owners would be eligible and interested in applying.

Commissioner Murray commented that it had been suggested that the Thomas family on Newington Road put their property into a conservation easement, but they were reluctant because they didn't understand that a conservation easement could still allow hunting if it was specified.

Alternate Commissioner, Jane Kendall asked whether the Watson parcel along Great Bay past Trickey's Cove would be a possibility considering it was land locked with a 25' right-of-way. Ms. Degnan said RCCD had access requirements with the use of Federal agency funds. Chair Hislop said that could be an issue with the Ripley property too. Ms. Degnan said the tax map also showed more wetlands on the abutting Boynton property than on the Ripley property.

Alternate Commissioner, Cindy Gunn said they would need to do a wetland and development study for the Watson property. Commissioner Kendall said she thought a conservation would probably be best because the limited access, the terrain with streams and a gorge that could be challenging to develop commercially. Ms. Degnan said they could do outreach on the importance of protection and then get an Open Space Bond for the purchase as they did for the Frink Farm. in 2003 and 2004. She

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said A.R.M funds were very competitive, but if they qualified, then they could combine the contribution with other funds. Chair Hislop said NH Fish and Game owned the owns abutting property.

Ms. Degnan said should could start out putting in about ten to fifteen hours walking the Ripley property and provide them with the applications, but they would need to get things done quickly to meet the deadlines. Co-Chair Weiner asked her hourly rate and she said \$65 an hour and recommended the Commission authorize \$1,000. Chair Hislop said they could use the Consultant budget.

Chair Hislop asked how much she thought they would need for the following year and Ms. Degnan said she usually puts in about 20 hours of research so she suggested setting aside \$1,300 for the pre-proposal in April and the rest in August 2016.

Chair Hislop announced that Planning Board Chair Denis Hebert was meeting DES and Eversource at Pease Development Authority at 9 a.m. on November 17, 2015 regarding an easement through the Flynn Pitt and had asked if a member of the Commission could attend as well.

2) Shoreline Protection – Community Outreach

Chair Hislop said Julie Peterson from NROC sent a note suggesting April 2 or 9, 2016 would be a better time to schedule another public education session to give them time to work on the project over the winter.

Ms. Degnan commented that she attended the April 2016 Spring on the Bay session and shared the information with Newcastle and Rye who were working on extending their wetland buffers.

3) Town Forest Management

Chair Hislop again referenced the email from Sarah Allen, Senior Principal Wetland Scientist for Normandeau Associates who was representing Eversource into the mitigation proposal to clean up the dump in the Town Forest, stating that the assessment was still in the early stages and the cost and the scope of the project were still unknown and would therefore, not be a likely candidate.

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4) **Budget 2016**

Chair Hislop said she would be attending the Budget meeting on the following Monday. She noted that there was still a balance remaining in the Secretarial budget. Co-Chair Weiner recommended keeping the line item the same and if the Board of Selectmen would cover any overages if they underestimated.

Adjournment: *The meeting adjourned at 8:05p.m.*

Next Meeting: Thursday, 17, 2015

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

DRAFT