

Town of Newington, NH
CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes, Thursday, November 30, 2023

Call to Order: Chair Jane Hislop called the November 30, 2023, meeting at 6:35 PM.

Present: Commissioners Andrew Meigs; Jim Weiner; Town Planner, John Krebs; and Recording Secretary Jane Kendall

Absent: Vice-Chair Laura Rogers; Commissioner Derick Willson; Alternate Member, Bill Murray

1) Discussion of 2024 Conservation Commission Budget:

Chair Hislop reviewed the line-item encumbrances from the 2023 Conservation Commission budget, and the Commissioners discussed what should be kept, and what should be changed for the 2024 proposal to the Board of Selectmen and Budget Committee.

Commissioner Jim Weiner said he was impressed with the work done with a skid mount in removing invasive species on Fox Point. Commissioner Weiner said he asked Town Road Agent, Lenny Thomas if such a piece of equipment could be used by his crew, as well as asking Town Planner, John Krebs if the Conservation Commission could use their perpetual interest-bearing fund to purchase such equipment for \$30,000 to did not0 considering that the Town didn't own a bush hog.

Mr. Krebs said he spoke with Town Administrator, Martha Roy, and Town legal counsel, and they said they did not think they could buy equipment with the fund that was intended for conservation maintenance, but not the purchase of equipment.

Chair Hislop commented that she would also be concerned with who would run the equipment considering the Town did not have sufficient staffing, however, she thought the fund would cover the hiring of someone to do the maintenance periodically.

Chair Hislop went on to say that she talked to the Board of Selectmen about the fund, and her feeling was that she would like to see what would happen to the trimmed site on Fox Point before determining what needed to be done next.

Mr. Krebs said Don Knowles, who had done the work, said he thought the Town could run a bush hog periodically for maintenance every five years for the area he had already done, and consider an initial cutting with the skid mount in other areas.

Commissioner Andrew Meigs said the Department of Transportation had been clearing a lot of areas around I-84, and perhaps they could observe an area they had done three years later.

Chair Hislop said she did not know what the Town road crew used to mow the fields, but the equipment she observed cutting Fox Point looked like a riding mower.

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Commissioner Weiner wondered if they could use it to maintain roadsides. Chair Hislop said the maintenance fund could only be used on conservation lands, and could not be used on other Town lands.

Commissioner Weiner asked if the Planning Board covered legal costs for applications now, and Mr. Krebs said they did.

Commissioner Weiner asked if the Conservation Commission was an advisory board to the Planning Board, and if the Conservation Commission would be reimbursed when hiring consultants needed when an application review was in process. Mr. Krebs replied that conservation commissions had no regulatory authority according to NHRSA36-A, but they did work with the Planning Board, and still had to budget funds for consultants, even when billed to applicants later.

Commissioner Weiner suggested moving funds to beautification to spread native wildflower mixes on conservation lands. Chair Hislop responded that seeds didn't work well unless grounds were cleared because invasives often take over, and so it becomes a wasted effort.

Commissioner Weiner discussed the Board of Selectmen's perceptions of the Commission's lower than usual encumbrances in 2023.

Chair Hislop said she had spent \$50 for the second community education outreach, so the expenditure listed on the budget sheet was slightly off.

Discussion ensued regarding the secretarial budget, and minimal pay for short or cancelled meetings due to lack of quorums, etc.

Commissioner Weiner said need to make sure there were quorums because doesn't make sense for staff to be present when there was no quorum. Commissioner Weiner suggested moving \$500 into wages for a total of \$3,300.

Chair Hislop asked if Recording Secretary Jane Kendall could bill for time driving down and back now that since she had to move out of town. Commissioner Weiner responded that employees were paid for the place of employment. Mr. Krebs said it seemed fair considering driving an hour for an hour meeting, but it had been discussed with the Planning Board and the chair was not willing to do that.

Commissioner Meigs suggested that Ms. Kendall could charge a minimal flat rate for meetings.

Mr. Krebs recommended that Ms. Kendall consider and return with a proposal.

Commissioner Meigs suggested reducing community education outreach down to from \$1,000 to \$500, and putting it into secretarial wages.

Commissioner Weiner suggested going down to \$300, and asking the Board of Selectmen if needed more. Mr. Krebs responded that it was risky to rely on that because the Board of Selectmen could not cover everyone that does that.

Jim Weiner moved to keep the 2024 budget at \$9,342, the same as 2023. Andrew seconded and all were in favor.

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86 2) Other Business and Additional Discussions:
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88 Chair Hislop said that Ashley Stokes, Coordinator of the Seacoast Science
89 Center Marine Mammal Rescue dropped shoreline signs off, and placed one by the
90 stairs to the Fox Point beach and one by the docks on metal posts in October, but they
91 were no longer there when she checked earlier in the month.
92 *****

93 Chair Hislop informed the Commission that Don Knolls had cleared the edges of
94 the fields on Fox Point earlier, but not the center fields had also been mowed by the
95 Town completely now.
96 *****

97 Chair Hislop asked Mr. Krebs about the status of the installation of the new water
98 main across Great Bay through Fox Point by the City of Portsmouth Water Department.
99 *****

100 Chair Hislop said Mr. Krebs had given her copy on a New Hampshire
101 Department of Environmental Services (DES) wetlands violation regarding the draining
102 of a private pond at Captain's Landing, which they put in when they developed the road
103 years ago. Commissioner Weiner commented that the pond draining had also caused
104 erosion of the culvert several years earlier, and the owner was told not to drain again,
105 but it happened again, so DES and the building inspector were informed.

106 Commissioner Weiner said he wondered if it had remained open because it was
107 dry, and not filling. Commissioner Meigs commented that something may have gotten
108 into the valve seat.
109 *****

110 Mr. Krebs informed the Commissioners that they needed another meeting on
111 Thursday, December 14, 2023, regarding a residential site development at the former
112 Pickering residence at the end of Carter's Lane.

113 Chair Hislop asked if the new owner was aware that the Town owned abutting
114 property, and Mr. Krebs replied that the new owner had surveyed his lot.

115 Commissioner Meigs said he did not think he would be able to attend.
116 *****

117 Mr. Krebs said he did not want to send emails begging for attendance as
118 members were appointed to the Commission, and it was their responsibility to attend.
119 Mr. Krebs said the Planning Board and ZBA did not have problems with attendance, but
120 the Commission frequently had a problem with meeting quorums, and suggested that
121 they get more alternates. Commissioner Weiner suggested that they send a letter to
122 everyone that the board needs more alternates.

123 The Commission discussed meeting at an earlier time. Mr. Krebs said it was
124 expected that meetings be held in the evening so townspeople and applicants could

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attend, so it was not fair to meet during the day. It was suggested that they meet at 6 p.m. instead of 6:30 p.m.

Minutes: Commissioner Meigs moved to approve the October 5, 2023, Minutes. Commissioner Weiner seconded, and all were in favor.

Adjournment: *Chair Hislop moved to adjourn. Commissioner Weiner seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 7:46 p.m.*

Next Meeting: Thursday, December 14, 2023

Respectfully

Submitted by: Jane K. Kendall, Recording Secretary