

**CONWAY CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, September 13, 2017**

The September monthly meeting of the Conway Conservation Commission convened at 6:30 P.M. at the Whitaker Home Site Meeting House in North Conway.

Present: Chairman Rob Adair, Vice Chairman Larry Huemmler, Linda Kearney, Nat Lucy, Alternate; Pat Ferland, Alternate; Selectmen Representative Dave Weathers

Absent: Carol Lyman, Treasurer; Dan Lucy, Karla Allen, Theresa Gallagher, Recording Secretary

Also Attending: Forester Don Johnson, Larry Garland, MWV Rec Path

1. **Approval of the Minutes for 8/9/2017: Chairman Rob Adair asked for a motion to accept the August 9, 2017 meeting minutes; Linda Kearney said she had two small errors; #3 Rockpiles Mountain Development should be Rock House Mountain Development, and there is a double period a couple of lines down. Dave Weathers made a motion to accept the August 9, 2017 meeting minutes as corrected; seconded by Larry Huemmler. Rob Adair called for a vote to approve the minutes of the August 9, 2017 meeting minutes as corrected. Motion passed (6-0).**
2. Public Comment:

Larry Garland of the MWV Rec Path Committee appeared before the Conway Conservation Commission to talk about the MWV rec path project. The project involves Town land, and the Committee is inviting the public to look at the project and ask questions or make comments. At this point the project is referred to as a proposal. The Committee has not submitted an advanced concept, but they are discussing the plans and are trying to build support for the project.. Larry Garland displayed a map and explained to the Board what part of the land is involved; it starts from the end of Hemlock Lane through the Pudding Pond area, continuing up to Cranmore. The key element is to use the rec path in the bypass corridor as a recreation path. The Committee asked the DOT for permission to use the corridor, and they are reviewing the proposal.

Larry Garland reported that the DOT has to consider how the bypass corridor was established. It involved eminent domain land acquisitions that cost money, and there was a stipulation that if the State did not take action on the bypass within 20 years as proposed, then there is an obligation either return or sell the land that was acquired through Federal funding. The Rec Path Committee suggests that, if the State granted permission to build a dedicated non-motorized recreation path that could qualify as an alternative transportation project. With a group of activists who would like to have a rec path developed, it is a credible business plan. The MWV Trails Association engaged consultants as advisors to work on a capital campaign to see if it is feasible to come up with the money to build this project. Larry Garland reported that based on preliminary estimates from engineers, it would cost \$2 million, and with overhead administrative fees it would be about \$2.3 million. The Steering Committee that was formed have been working on conceptual designs, with consultants out on the field looking for wetlands mitigation, soil analysis and footing on bridges. They are confident that the money can be raised without asking for public funding. The DOT will hold meetings for the Town's people to discuss the rec path, next week, and in October another meeting to discuss the bypass. They are

looking for a mutual solution. Larry Garland spoke more in detail about the plans, pointing out the wetlands that the DOT is building up. He stated that the Rec Path Committee could have used existing trails, but they did not think that is the best idea. Those trails already get a lot of use from many people. The Trails Association's proposal is to build a path, and they do not want to have conflicts of interest. If the Trails Association were to use the established paths, there is an area that is pitched at a 5% grade, which exceeds the specs that they want, which is a 4% grade. They would like to discuss the feasibility of locating a new alignment that's not on a current trail. The Trails Association spoke with Ben Wilcox at Cranmore and he supports the project. There's a road that comes off of Thompson Road, which has a small piece of land that was taken for the bypass. The Trails Association is proposing to use that area as an expanded trailhead parking lot; a sign would be placed there to notify vehicles that people will be crossing the road. The length from Hemlock Lane to Cranmore is 2.8 miles.

Forester Don Johnson commented that he is concerned about access for cars in that area because the landing off Thompson Road is used as a logging truck road; he wants to make sure the loggers still have access to that road. Larry Garland said they are taking that into consideration while working out the details. Dave Weathers commented that the State has not given any answers about questions concerning the State's obligation to reimburse the Federal Government. The land purchased from land owners does not have to be offered back to the original owners, and can be put up for bids. The Town is the steward of Redstone Quarry, but the State still owns it. Larry Garland said the State has to take some action now because the 20 years is up. The Trail Association is trying to offer a solution. Dave Weathers stated that if the bypass is not supported by the locals it will not be built. Mr. Garland stated that if the DOT allows the path as an alternative transportation project or corridor, then maybe they will not have to pay back the money. The Rec Path Committee is working their campaign to seek support from the community for the alternative transportation corridor.

Rob Adair said he likes the idea of the parking, because the existing parking lot is limited and people back out on to the street, causing possible accidents. He reminded everyone about the meeting in October with the DOT and the community to discuss the bypass.

3. Reports and Other Business:

Forester Don Johnson reported that they finished the early clearing on the Red Tail Trail, and it came out very well, looking great. This is the third time it was done; using the brontosaurus was a big help.

Don Johnson reviewed a proposed Forestry Budget that he presented to the Conway Conservation Committee. Whittaker Woods and Whittaker Home Site lists timber sales. Abenaki Trail will be brushed as they do annually. Hurricane Mountain Common Lands should be cut back to re-open the vista which offers a nice view of the ledges and the Moat Mountain. Marshall Conservation Area will continue trail building. A Forest Management Plan is recommended. The Vista on Pine Hill is growing back, and they will do what they can this year, but more work will be needed next year. Dave Weathers stated that he would like to see it done this year, because it's growing in fast and a lot of people use it. He asked when Don will do the work this year. Don Johnson said it would be in October before the foliage.

Don Johnson spoke about Pudding Pond and the issues with the north and south property lines. He believes they will have to hire someone to survey the land; they may have to relocate the line

because they are dealing with an encroachment with the condos. They plan to make some recommendations before the end of the year. They made a recommendation when they updated the Forest Management Plan at Pudding Pond to do some more timber stand improvement. They did the east side of the power lines, now they would like to do the west side.

Shedd Woods is general maintenance work.

Don Johnson reported that there were many recommendations for timber sales at Whittaker Woods. He has plans to do the harvesting. There are a lot more people using the area, and they don't understand the danger there is during harvesting. Don Johnson said they have closed parts before and put up signs and flagging, but the people come right into the area anyway. He said it's hard to stop people from using the trails. If they will do the harvesting, they will have to close a section of the park. Nat Lucy asked if Don thought it might not be worth it to close part of the park - to do the harvesting, Don Johnson said if there is a way to get it done, such as offering alternative routes, he would do it, but he will focus on the Lucy Trail right now. That will take about two weeks. Nat Lucy made a suggestion to do the work next year if he cannot get it done before the snow fall this year.

Rob Adair said he will present this budget to the Town on September 29, 2017. He also reported that Rich Gerard made some forest management plans for the Marshalls, and he wants to know if there are any savings in that plan. He has a copy and will send it to Don Johnson. Linda Kearney asked if they have to have a forest management plan. Don Johnson explained that it is required to be in a tree farm system, which is a way to be recognized as sustainable forestry. David Weathers stated that he would go along with Nat for this year, and not add the tree farm. Rob Adair noted that there was a lot of work done there two years ago, and based on that, the Conway Conservation Commission doesn't have an urgency for a forest management plan. Linda Kearny commented that there is no money for the forest management plan.

Dave Weathers asked how they can come up with a more accurate estimate of \$1,500 for the boundary lines at Pudding Pond. Don Johnson said he will make recommendations and will have it to Rob Adair before the 29th of the month. Dave Weathers suggested the cheapest way is to have both property owners agree on where the boundary line is; but if one contests the other, it could be expensive.

Dave Weathers suggested that Don Johnson prepare to do a presentation on the budget before the Conway voters, who will ask how urgent each item is in the budget. A question came up about the Conway Conservation Commission having its own funds. Rob Adair explained that the Conservation Commission has funds for the acquisition and maintenance of land, but the budget comes out of the Town's general funds. The revenue from timber harvests is used to pay back the general fund budget, and the excess goes into the land acquisition fund. The CCC is not self-funding, and some years timber harvests covered the budget and some years it did not. Nat Lucy asked if timber land improvement is covered by the timber sales. Rob Adair stated that it is. Dave Weathers commented that the CCC will not make money by having a forest management plan. The plan will add to the enjoyment for the people who use the trails and enjoy the scenery. Linda Kearney made a suggestion to remove the forest management plan from the proposed Forest Management Budget and bring the budget down to \$16,490. It was agreed. Dave Weathers also suggested removing the opening of the vista on Hurricane Mountain Road.

Conservation Land Reports: Larry Huemmler walked the East Conway Common Lands last week and it looks good.

4. Selectmen's Report: Dave Weathers reported that Board of Selectmen reviewed the agreement between the Upper Saco Valley Land Trust on Pine Hill and the Town; he made suggestions that it go back to the Upper Saco Valley Land Trust, and they agreed with the changes. They want the ability to have a snowmobile trail, but they do not want to lock it into the existing location because the trail exits the property in two or three locations. They know that the trail is going to change, and that will make a difference to where it enters Pine Hill. Dave Weathers reported that no applications have been submitted to the Board of Selectmen.
5. Round Table Discussion: None

Next Meeting – The next CCC meeting will be October 11, 2017 at 6:30 at the Whitaker Home Site Meeting House in North Conway.

Adjourn: Linda Kearny made a motion to adjourn at 7:47 P.M.; seconded by Pat Ferland. Passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Theresa Ann Gallagher

Recording Secretary