

**MINUTES OF MEETING
CONWAY CONSERVATION COMMISSION
October 14, 2009**

A meeting of the Conway Conservation Commission convened at 6:30 p.m. at the Whitaker Homesite in North Conway, NH. Present were: Paul Pinkham, David Weathers, Rob Adair, Dan Lucy, Conrad Briggs, and Alternate, Linda Kearney. Also present were Forester, Don Johnson, and Wink Lees representing The Nature Conservancy.

The Chair appointed Ms. Kearney a full voting member.

1. Approval of Minutes: 9/9/09 – Motion by Ms. Kearney, second by Mr. Weathers, that the Minutes of the Sept. 9th meeting be approved as circulated. Carried by unanimous vote.

2. Public Comment: None.

3. Reports:

a. Don Johnson – Mr. Johnson presented proposal for trail work in Whitaker Woods (\$4,690), to include work at the intersection of Vista, Gradual, and Power line Trails, and note that merchantable wood will be removed from the site and credited against the bill. He noted this was the area that was deemed highest priority.

Proposal for tree removal at the Abenaki Site was also provided, to include the area of the gift shop and cabins (\$7,500), which he noted “leaves a little leeway.” Mr. Johnson noted this is a project within itself, one concern being access. Note was made that the Town Manager was to check to see if they can get in through the access. Also included, if some of the pine is harvested, we might be able to raise \$2,000 which would still leave a reasonably stocked stand. He stated there is one very large tree in particular which is a lot of work to get down. He has had a tree climber come and look at it, which is how he arrived at the price.

Mr. Weathers questioned the cost of the contract. Mr. Johnson feels if done on an hourly basis it might figure out to be less than the estimate provided. Much of the wood is no good and would have to be taken away and gotten rid of. He offered either a contract price or on a not-to-exceed basis. Mr. Pinkham said we have an obligation to stabilize the area, also have the potential of doing something with the historical group in Concord who is interested in stabilizing/preserving one or more of the structures in there. Mr. Briggs questioned whether everything in there is beyond saving. Mr. Johnson stated he could not comment on the buildings. Mr. Pinkham stated they are going to be looked at from a preservation point of view. It depends on whether we get grant money. Mr. Briggs did not feel there is anything worth saving there. Mr. Pinkham said the State does not feel that way.

Upon question of the Abenakis doing some of the work, Mr. Pinkham noted they have not done what is included in the deed requirement, rehabilitating the gift shop to use as a place to stay is their main interest. Mr. Weathers said that Mr. Sires seems to feel it is a “wish list,”

but some work could be done to the gift shop. It was felt one or two of the cabins may be able to be preserved, but there is the issue of safety with the others. Mr. Pinkham said we also have to be careful not to be in a contrary position with the State – they are looking for grants. We have to go through the process of what the deed requires. Mr. Adair questioned whether the State is interested in the whole site as an historic site, his feeling being that there is no real value to the buildings other than the fact that Native Americans sold gifts from them. Mr. Pinkham said it demonstrates how they were used by some of the people and its development over time. We have to secure the place first, then see what takes place following that, see whether the State comes up with some money or some grant money can be obtained.

As regards trail work, Mr. Pinkham said we have a fair amount left in our budget for this year. Mr. Johnson estimated he could be in there within two weeks, with possibly one week's worth of work. The general consensus was Mr. Johnson should begin as soon as possible.

Proposed Forestry Budget – Mr. Johnson reviewed priorities: (1) *General consulting*; (2) *Lime, fertilize, seed and mulch trail constructed fall 2009*. [Mr. Johnson said this made the assumption that the trail would be constructed, but would probably not be seeded until the spring.] (3) *Mow road and trail under power lines, vista, and landing north of power lines*. (4) *Abenaki Site – tree removal and clean up around cabins and gift shop*. (5) *Compartment II – touch up/re-release softwood regeneration in CC#2 and 7 (5 acres)*. [Mr. Johnson noted this was something that was taken out of the budget for this year – probably the most important is re-releasing the softwood in the clear cuts in the vicinity of the Red Tail Trail.] (6) *Shedd Woods – Clear vista, brush saw edge of trails, signs, and openings*. (7) *Whitaker Woods – Trail improvements, location(s) to be determined*. (8) *Common Lands – Compartment I – touch up/re-release softwood regeneration in CC #14, 15, 16 & 19 (4 acres) – area on the Hurricane Mt. side*. (9) *Common Lands – Compartment II – Clear permanent wildlife openings and vista on Red Tail trail CC#5 (4 acres), CC #10 (7 acres)*. [Mr. Johnson proposes a piece of equipment (a Brontosaurus) be used on Red Tail Trail. He feels we would be able to obtain a Fish & Game grant to help with this. The cost would be about \$300 per acre, but cannot exceed \$2,000 a year with this grant.] (10) *Shedd Woods – Poison Ivy spray by Vegetation Control Service at a cost of about \$1,700*.

Mr. Pinkham said he will agree to propose a budget for “X” amount, we need to stay within the range of where we have been for the last couple of years. The budget is to be submitted Oct. 16th. It was noted nearly \$25,000 has been spent on just the trails in Whitaker Woods since 2005.

Mr. Pinkham said one item that was in the budget for a number of years was surveying one of the boundary lines (about \$3,000) Mr. Johnson stated he had given up on that. He noted it is the line along Burke's field. He emphasized it is not a good thing to have your property lines unmarked, missing, and will get more expensive as time goes on. He said all other lines have been marked, any that could be found have been painted. He agreed there is no sign of anyone infringing on the property. He stated it would be nice to someday get a painted line around the whole area. He offered to contact Bergeron for an updated proposal.

Budget – Mr. Pinkham noted the 2010 budget as submitted would be \$29,182. He stated conferences and education have been zeroed out again this year. Minutes, Office, Memberships stayed the same. A lesser amount has been included for The Nature Conservancy trail work and mapping (\$3,000 dropped to \$1500). The 2008 budget was \$19,415, 2009 is \$18,750. Mr. Pinkham asked for proposal of a target number that would allow us to put a more defined budget together to be submitted 10/16/09. **Motion made by Mr. Adair, second by Mr. Weathers, to submit a level funded budget from 2009, given the state of the economy. Motion carried by unanimous vote.** Note was made that level funding would be \$17,250. It was decided to round up to \$18,000.

b. Jeff Lougee – Mr. Lees reported on behalf of Mr. Lougee that TNC has been working this summer on water bars and Black Cap, cleared blow downs. Still need to do work around Pudding Pond before the season closes. He noted that TNC had some trail signs made by AMC, but has not finished putting them up. He said there have been some complaints about vehicles coming through the power line on Thompson Road, but they have placed some things there to plug up the hole a little.

Mr. Lees stated this summer they had people from the NY Chapter of TNC which has an internship program, who helped with trail work, cleaning out water bars, etc. They got a student Conservation crew to work on Black Cap trail – there were 6 or 8 of them and they did a great job. It would have cost \$18,000 to have them for a 4-week period – TNC got them at no cost. They put in water bars and stone steps where there was a lot of erosion. He said a number of people have been up Black Cap Trail between Sept. 16th and Oct. 12th – 600 people signed in. They have noticed this summer quite a bit of mountain bike use which is becoming a more popular activity. Mr. Lees expressed that he would like to get another student conservation crew to come in and do trail work – they work hard and are energetic. He said TNC is redoing trail maps, going back to the pocket size map which is more convenient.

Cort Hansen and Paul DegliAngeli joined the meeting. Mr. DegliAngeli presented a proposed 5k competition course map, noting that this area is now hosting a 650 skier event annually through a NH group – Nordic Coaches Assn. of which they are a member. He said they are having a problem getting venues around the State; Jackson recognizes the need to have a fixed competition course.

They are proposing maps showing trails that are seldom groomed, some not groomed for 20 years (which means they are not being used for ski touring). Secondly, they would list trails proposed for closure. He said looking at maps distributed, there are no new trails; however, in order to make it a competition course some of these intersections will require some work. He stated if the Commission approves, he or Mr. Hansen would go out and flag areas that need to be widened in order to make it happen, then would form a budget to see if it is a 3, 5 or 10 year plan. He said the proposal made by Mr. Johnson supports what their group is trying to do here.

Mr. Pinkham said the Commission has a Trails Committee (made up of Messrs. Adair, Briggs and Lucy along with Cort Hansen and Mr. Johnson), addressing trails to be closed or to be improved, and questioned whether this fits with their long term plan. They would need to come to the Commission for agreement or disagreement. Mr. Pinkham explained the first use of Whitaker Woods is woods, some of our trail work has been what we need, or no longer need, from a forest management perspective. He stated the Trail Committee needs to determine if these proposed trails are appropriate.

Mr. Weathers questioned whether this course, if established and adopted, would be for training or for racing. Mr. DegliAngeli stated the KHS race schedule has 6 to 8 races a year in Whitaker Woods. In each of the last 20 years that means 6 to 8 different courses. From now on those 6 to 8 would be on the course proposed. He said it is not for us to determine which ones you would reclaim. If people know what the race course is, then they know where they can ski.

Mr. Adair said this is consistent with what we have done over the last few years and would follow the south side of the power lines. He said the “S” curve has not been in any previous discussions, there are a couple of trees that would need to go, but he does not know how much grading would be required. Mr. DegliAngeli said if the Commission feels it would not want to do the “S” Curve then the option would be to take Armstrong Alley back to the narrows. You would end up with an acute angle.

Mr. Hansen said we would have to assess priorities and where it fits in the 5k order. KHS, in their athletic class, hosts an inordinate amount of races because other schools do not have the facilities that we do. About 80% of State championships are held in Whitaker Woods. There is a venue fee which brings revenue in.

Mr. Briggs questioned whether they are talking about grooming only these trails. Mr. DegliAngeli said no. He said many folks are only comfortable skiing on the flats so they have identified that in the *seldom used or not groomed* category. He noted Vista, Upper Schuss, Bancroft should remain; from a ski touring perspective some could go away. Mr. Adair said a few years ago we actively closed a few trails, some we abandoned, what we have found is when things are put in the way, people go ahead and clear it out. Mr. DegliAngeli suggested replanting. Mr. Adair stated that can become expensive. Mr. Johnson said the quest has been trail closures for a long time. Mr. Briggs said he has noted a lot of trails that could be used for skiing. Mr. Johnson offered to prepare a list of the ones he would like to see closed. Messrs. DegliAngeli and Hansen said they would be happy to work with the Trails Committee.

Ms. Kearney wished to know whether we are talking about a 5k trail or trail closings. Mr. Pinkham said closing trails is the last thing we want to consider because just ignoring them is effective. Mr. Lucy commented in the winter if you want to close a trail you just do not groom it. Mr. Pinkham said he does not see a reason to close trails year round; if there were to be a plan by the Trails Committee to adopt a 5k loop, that could be relatively easily done. He said there is some money in this year’s budget to do some of this. It was decided Messrs.

DegliAngeli and Hansen will meet with the Trails Committee to try to determine a cost estimate.

Mr. Hansen was asked where we stand on the signs and kiosks. He stated the kiosks are out there, they will be posting rules/regulations signs shortly.

c. Treasurer's Report – None.

d. Selectmen's Report – None.

e. Wetlands Applications – None.

4. Other Business:

Orienteering and Mapping – It was reported that Tony Fedderer, a member of White Mt. Milers, has previously conducted orienteering events in Whitaker Woods and will be attending the next meeting to address this again. It was noted that he has also provided Whitaker Woods map and has been informed that we are not fond of having maps produced that reflect trails other than what we recognize. His response was he would mark differently those trails which are abandoned.

Redstone Cell Tower wetlands variance request - Mr. Weathers said Selectmen voted 4 to 1 for a balloon test for the viewscape; there were only a couple of places one would be able to see it from.

5. Next Meeting – November 11, 2009.

6. Adjourn: Motion was made by Ms. Kearney, seconded by Mr. Weathers and carried, that the meeting be adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gail T. Currier, Recording Secretary