

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES ALBANY CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Tuesday, December 6, 2016. 6:00 pm

**Members present: Rob Nadler, Cathy Ryan, Mike Stewart, Peter Carboni, Cort Hansen and Austen Bernier; Alternate. Albany Selectmen; Rick Hiland, Joe Ferris
Public: Colton Dow, Jake Davis, Paul Richardson, _ Richardson, Dave Richardson, Steve Knox**

Rob called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Since it was a joint meeting with the Albany Board of Selectmen (BOS), Rob suggested the board cover the topics as listed in the handout provided starting with farming contracts and finalize the land management agreements. Rick said he wants to confirm the issue of contracts vs. lease arrangement for farmers with Town Counsel (TC). Rob suggested a 7 year agreement be established pending the approval at Town Meeting in March. Colton Dow noted that a 7 year contract would be required should the farmers have need to use any federal agricultural grant funding or bank financing. Rick noted that the new TC will be coming to the BOS the following week and the topic can be addressed then. Rob discussed whether the CC should add a line item in the budget for legal fees, but that individually, he was reluctant to place additional costs on taxpayers to pay legal fees for two boards from the same town. He said that the CC had always relied on the advice of the prior TC's and he would hope it could continue doing so, particularly since up until recently, the CC had not required much time of the TC. Rick suggested that the proposed budget include a small amount for legal fees that way if required the line item would already exist and funding could be amended or reallocated.

Rob asked for questions from the farmers to the BOS or vice versa. Joe asked farmers about lease term length.

On the topic of the NHFG buildings on the former DOT site, Rob said that any further work on the lease agreement would need to be done by the BOS but that draft agreement been reviewed by the NH Attorney General and the former TC and was the culmination of work done over the past several years with representatives of the NHFG and that the the FG would like to have a trial lease of a shorter duration to test and see how the arrangement worked out for both the Town and the FG department. Conversation around whether the FG site was most appropriate for the farmers use followed. Rick said he would like to tour the building site before any agreement was made. Rick said he wanted to determine if there were any property tax implications for the Town under any lease agreement. The BOS will review the lease contract. The Town as part of the lease contract will be required to plow a small portion of the site Rob noted and eventually the issue of power and water may need to be addressed.

The topic of acceptance of grant monies by the CC was discussed. Rob asked if TC could research to see if the CC could be authorized to accept grant monies under \$10,000 as is the practice by several towns in the state according to the NH Association of Conservation Commissions. He explained that the frequent application of grant funding such as the kiosks, trail work or materials done by NEMBA volunteers, the recent memorial bench, mowing and cutting work done by CC members, seeding of skid roads and landings, etc. would be construed as donations and that frequently requesting authorization of both the BOS or town meeting would be unwieldy and cumbersome. The CC suggested that the BOS present a warrant article to the town in March to grant the CC this authority.

Following up on conversations with John Neeley from the Saco District USFS at the November meeting, Cort requested that the BOS write a MOU with the USFS expressing an interest in participating in any programs that reduce the risk of wildland fires by reducing excess fuel on forest land around Albany. These hazard mitigation programs focus on critical areas based on forest type, such as oak and pine, slope and exposure. In Albany

there are several such situations along Passaconaway Road from the Moat trailhead to the covered bridge; Bald Hill Road, and some areas around the Town Forest. This was made abundantly clear in the recent Big Brook Fire in November which burned over 300 acres. Cort said that the Conservation Commission would be interested in participation in this program in and in the field adjacent to the Town Forest. Cort said the town has signed a similar agreement with the Conway FD the last 2 years. Rob said that such an agreement would allow the USFS to use their resources if the Conway FD or NH DRED were not able to. (In November Neeley had said that Gilford, NH has a cooperative agreement with the USFS and that Albany should do the same if they are interested in pursuing this funding.) This would also involve the CFD and the NH DRED as in the past, using a burn plan created by the USFS. Cort noted that this agreement will need to be coordinated with the Albany selectmen as has been done in 2 recent years.

Jake Davis asked if the Albany School Board could assist in making an educational tie-in between agriculture and the school system during the growing season. In November he had also suggested that an opportunity would be also available at the same time with the cross country running race hosted by Kennett HS in the fall. Jake and Colton both felt it is important to exposure students to farming and try to capture the growing trend in agricultural education programs. Joe said he could help. Jake said he or Colton could meet with the School Board to explain their ideas.

Rob asked for comments or questions regarding the minutes for the 11/1/16 meeting. With no questions or comments; Rob asked for a motion to approve those minutes. With a motion to approve the 11/1/16 meeting minutes and with a second the meeting minutes were approved 5-0.

A discussion about a 10 year plan was made with the primary interest in restoring the front portion of the field adjacent to Rt. 16 by improving drainage and making soil improvements in order to add it to the usable field area for agricultural use. Mention was made of potential timber that still could be harvested in the area near the Saco District Ranger Station as well as the area southwest of the ski jump. It was noted that the timber management plan had been created by Don Johnson of Forest Land Improvement. Johnson has been advising many towns in the area for their forest lands.

Dave Richardson asked about whether or not something might be done about the poison ivy present in the NW corner of the fields. Cort said that Bill Lord from UNH CE Service previously had noted that there are no effective organic herbicides to combat poison ivy. Goats are used in many cases and can be effective if available. Rob noted that livestock grazing on the field is a questionable issue pending USVLT approval.

The next scheduled meeting is January 3rd, 2017 at 6:00 pm.

With no other comments, and with no further business to address, a motion to adjourn the meeting was made and with a second the motion was approved 5-0 and the meeting adjourned at 6:50 pm.

Cort Hansen, Conservation Commission Secretary.