

# MEETING MINUTES

## ALBANY CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Tuesday, April 5th, 2016. 6:00 pm

**Members present: Rob Nadler, Cathy Ryan, Mike Stewart, Peter Carboni, Cort Hansen. Public: Steve Knox.**

Rob called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm. Rob asked for comments or questions regarding the minutes for the 2/2/2016 meeting. With no questions or comments Rob asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Peter made a motion to approve the 2/2/16 meeting minutes and with a second, the minutes for the meeting were approved 5-0.

Rob noted that since the Town Meeting had occurred since the last meeting the Commission would need to vote for the positions of Commission Chairman, Vice Chair, and Secretary. Peter made a motion to nominate Rob for chairman. Mike seconded the motion and with a 5-0 vote Rob was elected. Rob made a motion to nominate Cort for secretary. Peter seconded the motion and Cort was elected 5-0. Rob noted Cathy's presence as the new Selectman's representative to the Commission. He made a motion to nominate Cathy as vice chair and with a second Cathy was elected 5-0.

Since Cathy was new to the commission Rob explained he felt that a review of the Commission and its work was needed. He explained the creation of the Town Forest, its funding background and the relationship of Upper Saco Valley Land Trust (USVLT). He noted the conservation easements that are held by USVLT and the exclusion of the 6+ acre parcel for town use on the northwestern edge of the property. Rob explained the 50 year window the town has to act on use of the property before the exclusion clause expires. He noted that the town would not be able to use the property for commercial purposes. Rob noted that the town acquired the property which was appraised for over \$800,000 for a cost of \$175,000. Additional costs which include surveying, appraisal and closing costs pushed the total value to nearly \$1M. The conservation fund reserve was the result of a surplus remaining from the timber harvest which was done after the purchase to cover a gap in funding of the land purchase cost which was financed by the TPL, of which, Rob negotiated a 10% discount on the repayment to the Trust for Public Land (TPL) and thus the reserve money.

Rob explained the status of the field access behind the USFS Saco District Station and a history of the discussion with Tom Wagner WMNF Supervisor, and the involvement of various District Rangers over creating an alternative road access point. He noted that any such road construction would only be completed as the needs of the USFS dictated and that may take years.

He explained the past work with the NHFG and the pending lease agreement of outbuildings at the former DOT site which will be used to provide support facilities for the farmers using the agricultural fields. The agreement has already been reviewed by the NH Attorney General and the Town Counsel. The agreement will need to be approved and signed by the Albany BOS. Rob indicated that there is no immediate urgency since there is no planned use for this growing season since by the farmers. Future access to the fields would be created by a short spur road behind the site to the planned road.

Rob covered the Dow and Richardson farmers land use agreements, radio airplane club land use agreement and the use of the property by SAU 9.

Current maintenance work that has been ongoing with the town forest, brush cutting, mowing, trail maintenance, policing issues, etc. was covered. The cost of soil improvement work that Dow has performed for the

last 2 seasons was noted and that his use fees were waived due to the high costs involved. Dow spent over \$1000 alone on fuel to till his parcel. Since the parcel is organically certified, no herbicides can be used and Dow is working to kill quack grass by frequent periodic tilling to kill the roots the common practice that is done with weeds of this type.

The status of the 2 open grant awards was covered; a).the parking lot development and, b). the electrical utility service connection. Rob reported that the cost of a hook up to Eversource power will be too prohibitive. He handed out a sheet with respective costs for both surface and sub-surface power that William Abbott from USVLT has researched. Underground costs would be \$15+/ foot while overhead costs would be \$21+/foot, plus a transformer costs of \$1,500, and those costs not including cost of the ROW clearing, logging, stumping, etc. Minimum distances of 650 to 850 feet were used in the calculations. If power was provided, someone would have to be responsible as the owner, likely the town with reimbursement coming back from the tenant farmers. However, electrical service is not going to go forward due to the cost and the limited grant funding at this time. The access and signage grant still has a balance that will be used for leveling and grade work at the central access point on the north side of the Kancamangus by the gate. Cort, Mike and Rob have cut and enlarged the present site, stumping and burning, etc. Curtis Coleman has evaluated the project and will provide equipment and materials as soon as feasible. Rob noted that the material costs for the two kiosks that Paul Brown, Cort and he had built were paid from this grant already.

Rob said that all projects were predicated on not incurring any costs for the town.

The other parking lot project on-going is the creation of a state constructed turnout on the western edge of the town forest on the Kancamangus. Rob has been working with North Country Council (NCC) to encourage the State DOT to widen the roadside and create a turnout for parking there. The NCC Transportation Committee is assisting with this project. Once this lot is created a short spur trail will be built to connect to the trail network and another kiosk built at that location along with trail signage, etc. Mike discussed the development of a trail that connects the Bald Hill town forest parcel to the Swift River parcel. He has been working with the Thomas family toward that goal.

Rob reviewed the land use agreements on the fields starting with Suzanne Brown. The Dow agreement was initially a 5 year agreement with options for renewal. The Dow agreement has subsequently been extended to 7 years in order to allow Dow to gain bank financing of his operation. The Richardson agreement is similar; they have indicated a possible interest in some green house use. The easement with USVLT has some restrictions in that area, but William from USVLT has indicated a willingness to be very flexible in that regard. The commission is looking toward site locations where green houses will not be within the Rt. 16 view shed.

Rob said that USVLT was initially only interested in forest land preservation, but they are evolving and placing more emphasis on agriculture. He noted that they are a great source for grant money as has been already demonstrated.

Cathy said she had a list of questions that the Board of Selectmen have asked that need to be answered. Rob said that he would be meeting with them at their regular meeting on 4/6 to answer those questions.

Commission members discussed project lists for spring, including brush cutting, mowing, parking lot completion, trail work, etc. Cort said he would like to finish the cutting brush along the ditch line where we ended last spring. This cutting should be a lot easier than before. He would also like to push back the encroaching trees on the NW corner of the field beyond the airfield including trees and honeysuckle bushes and perhaps work on the edges of the detached field at the very NW corner by the river. Cort mentioned having the Mt Washington Valley Radio Control Club sign a new land use agreement, noting a small fee for use of the field, with a clause for in kind service included. Rob noted that they have provided a certificate of insurance naming the town as also insured. Rob moved to have Cort send the airfield use agreement to the MWVRCC for signatures.

Rob noted the contribution of Greg Caporossi from the TPL who is leaving that organization after many years of work. It was agreed that he was instrumental in helping establish the Albany Town Forest and it would not have been possible without his assistance.

Under other business, Cort has been in contact with the O'Connor family about putting up a memorial bench on the Town Forest in memory of their parents. After last month vote Cort has replied to the family that a location and design has to be agreed to before receiving final approval of the both the Commission and the USVLT.

Cort noted that initial plans to burn the field on Wednesday 4/6 by a joint units of the USFS, Conway Village Fire Department and the NH Division of Forest and Lands has been postponed until tentatively 4/11, weather depending on favorable burn conditions. Site preparation work may be taking place on 4/7 & 4/8.

With no other comments and with no further business to address, Cathy made a motion to adjourn the meeting and with a second the motion was approved and the meeting adjourned at 7:05 pm.

Cort Hansen, Conservation Commission Secretary.