

ALBANY CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Tuesday, July 8th, 2014, 5:30 pm

Members present: Rob Nadler, Josephine Howland, Paul Brown & Cort Hansen. Dick VanDyne alternate. Absent Jack Rose. Public; Joanne Ducas, Oliva Saunders UNHCES, William Abbott USVLT, Colton Dow and Nicole.

Rob called the meeting to order at 5:32 pm.

William introduced the involvement of the Upper Saco Valley Land Trust (USVLT) as easement holder on the Town Forest and the recent completion of the Agricultural Management Plan for the Town Forest that has been created in cooperation with the USVLT and Olivia Saunders from the UNH Cooperative Extension Service and Nels Liljedahl from USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. William noted that the meat of the plan was on pages 8-9, noting recommended versus required agricultural practices. He referred to the 3 maps attached as exhibits, with Map B having the field divided into proposed units with soil types, and Map C divided into farmer units showing buffer strips and other management zones.

Rob explained the limited access issue using the current USFS road which is not a deeded access point, and the future plan to create an road from the former NH DOT site to the fields along with the current plan to use some of the DOT buildings for washrooms, equipment sheds, cooler storage etc. with agreement from NH Fish and Game who will be the new landlord on that property. Rob said that grant monies could be utilized to improve buildings and add coolers and washroom facilities. Rob noted that the plan to have the USFS build the new road from Rt. 112 to the field has run into some hurdles with the Mike Martin the current Saco District Ranger who is leaving his position there in July. Martin had recently indicated to Rob that there may be some problems with the USFS building a road that was not on federal land. Rob suggested that the government's interest in removing public access in the area around the Forest Service compound might cause them to reconsider the problem once again with a new district ranger, or that he would renew the discussion with Tom Wagner, the WMNF Forest Supervisor who was supportive in the past on this problem.

Rob and Paul discussed the proposed fees for leasing land on the Town Forest. Haying at \$20/acre, Vegetable farming at \$50/acre for 1-5 acres, and \$40/acre for 5 acres or more, Pasture / grazing at \$25/acre.

Colton was asked about the acreage his was interested in and he said 8-20 acres for organic vegetable production. Joanne said she was interested in 8 acres with 4 acres for organic vegetable production and 4 acres for either grain or cover crop use.

Josephine noted her concern with butterfly habitat preservation. William noted that the Agricultural Management Plan has reserved a buffer zone along the Swift River and that pollinator buffer strips were shown on the management maps both to separate farm plots and to preserve habitat for butterfly and bees.

William brought up the issue of livestock, with his concern being only with larger livestock such as cows, cattle, sheep or goats. The concern was for livestock containment issues and the extended liabilities that the CC may have if livestock were to run loose and cause problems in the area.

Glen Mitchell's interest was discussed with the most recent word that he was still interested but he needed more time to consider it this year.

Dick asked Colton if he had any greenhouses and he indicated that he did use greenhouses for early crop propagation. The topic of greenhouses on the site was discussed with William explaining easement restrictions on greenhouses as non-permeable surfaces, view shed preservation, etc. Smaller scale greenhouses and high tunnel structures would be permitted as long as they did not violate the easement restrictions. Josephine indicated that the Mad Planter on Rt 16 near the Tamworth/Albany town line might have some used structures and equipment for sale if Joanne or Colton was interested.

Returning to the topic of desired acreage and location Colton suggested that he would be interested in the 8.22ac. lot and the 3.99ac lot. Joanne indicated that she would be interested in the 5.88ac., 1.28ac., and the .86ac lots. The northwest corner of the field was discussed toward future use as a permaculture site for orchard use, etc. Mitchell's area would be the 4.76ac lot. Also the 5.12ac lot once drainage and improvements could be made, which may result in increased potential area for seasonal agricultural use.

The question of when lease fees would take effect was discussed. It was agreed that the desire was to make agricultural use of the field work to all parties best interest. It was agreed that there would be no fees charged until the fields went into vegetable production next year in order to allow farmers to invest in costs associated with tilling and seed. Cort noted that the weed control and mowing of field area was the commission's initial concern, and as such, this would be a good arrangement for all parties.

The topic of water came up. The use of the test points on the property was discussed. Since they are on town property the use of the well heads seems proper, but William suggested we follow-up with the Conway Village Fire District on that question.

Commission members will work with William to mark lots on the field using USVLT's GPS.

Rob asked for comments on the minutes from the 6/3/14 meeting. Hearing no comments, Josephine made a motion to approve the minutes and with Rob's second, the motion passed. The minutes were then approved 5-0.

Rob said that he had talked with a state DOT official and he was wondering about creating a wide spot on the Kancamagus Highway at the western end of the property instead of building parking lot off-road citing the various advantages of this for winter access, law enforcement monitoring of parking, etc. He said he would discuss this topic further with the DOT.

Rob noted that Cort had finished the new kiosks and they were now signed with information and maps.

Rob said that Paul, Cort and he had finished cutting and chipping brush on the fields for the season. Sumac and brush on the north side of the field were cut and chipped. Chipper rental was \$175. with some diesel fuel and brush hog blades costs associated as well.

Cort mentioned that off-road access could be a problem and he noted two incidents that had concerned him with motor-cross use off the Kancamagus.

Rob said he would write a letter to the USFS regarding the planned access road.

With no other topics to address, a motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting and the meeting adjourned at 6:45 pm.

Cort Hansen, Conservation Commission Secretary.