

Minutes
Kingston Conservation Commission
1/11/2024

Meeting called to order at 6:45 pm at the Kingston Community Library

Present: Evy Nathan, Shaw Tilton, Linda Foss (Zoom), Greg Senko (Zoom) Charles Hart (Select Board Ex Officio - Zoom)

Excused Absences: Marghi Bean, Bob Smith, Elizabeth Mello

Guests: Jeff Sluder

Secretary's Report:

Minutes from the 12/7/23 meeting were reviewed. All members present accepted the minutes with no changes.

Treasurer's Report:

Conservation Fund: \$26, 132.81
(Working Balance \$12,536.81, Aquatic Invasives Reserve \$13,596.00)
Forest Fund: \$17,423.95

Shaw noted that the increase in the Conservation Fund balance was due to a \$2,250 deposit of unknown origin. There is no record of the \$500 Pollinator Pathways being deposited. Shaw will work with Finance to resolve the discrepancies.

Russ Shute of Powwow Pond Council told Shaw that Aqualogic Divers' quote for 2024 milfoil remediation is approximately \$20,000, which is higher than expected.

Greg informed Shaw that a recent communication from Amy Smagula of NH DES indicated that funding would be available in 2024 for aquatic invasive treatment with a reimbursement rate of 40-50%. Greg estimated that Country Pond's invasive removal costs for 2024 would be \$4,000 - \$8,000.

Correspondence:

- NH Tree Farm newsletter. Evy handed out hard copies of the carbon capture and sequestration article from last month's newsletter.
- SELT Newsletter, types of harvests. Evy handed out copies to those present.

- NHACC. Thank you letter for KCC membership renewal.
- UNH Taking Action for Wildlife. Postcard announcing this spring's webinar series.
- Email contact from a resident reporting a bulldozer clearing brush in a wetland area at 23 Rockrimmon Road. Evy determined that there was no permit on file for this residence and notified Code Enforcement.

Planning Board, DES, OEP, ZBA:

- Comments were sent to the Planning Board regarding the Unitil utility pole replacement project.
- Evy sent preliminary comments to the Planning Board as per their request, regarding the proposed Seminary project, noting that there may be an intermittent stream/vernal pool adjacent to the work area. The project is not yet in formal review.

New & Ongoing Business:

- Fairgrounds Study Group. Evy gave a short recap of the group's first meeting. Several different alternatives were offered for consideration.
- New deer stand rules. Evy read aloud the new NH Fish & Game rules for use and removal of deer stands and game cameras.
- Valley Lane Forest Management Plan update. Ron Klemarczyk said that he had finished collecting data and was waiting for some maps to be completed.
- Evy reported on the archeological project with the Heritage Commission to map the cellar holes adjacent to the orange trail in the Valley Lane Town Forest.
- Proposed Warrant article: The Commission discussed a petition warrant article that will be discussed at the deliberative session on January 14. Mr. Hart read the article aloud to those present. The article proposes that a 5-year moratorium be placed on land conservation in Kingston pending the development and execution of a plan to clear dead wood and other natural debris from town-owned conservation land as an attempt to prevent wildfires. It proposes that the plan be developed by the Conservation Commission at the direction of a citizen panel. This plan would apply only to town-owned land and not to privately owned land. Evy pointed out that there are a number of inaccuracies in the warrant that would have to be addressed at the deliberative session. The following points were discussed:
 - Conservation's job is to monitor land that has already been conserved, according to the requirements of the conservation easement.
 - The \$400,00 in funds mentioned in the warrant article are the Land Capital Acquisition Fund. Conservation has no access to or authority over how or when these funds are spent. This fund was previously approved by taxpayers by warrant article.
 - Land trusts like SELT and The Nature Conservancy are often the source of funding for purchasing and conserving land in Kingston. Private landowners also elect to put property into conservation easements. A moratorium on spending

town funds would not prevent these other methods of adding more conserved land in Kingston.

- The only land where Conservation is allowed or required to make a forest management plan is in the town forests, which comprise only 3% of total town land. At this time, all forest management plans are either current or in the process of being updated.
- Evy shared the warrant article with County Forester Greg Jordan. He replied with several statistics and stated that fire is not a frequent occurrence in New Hampshire's forest habitats. He added that foresters in NH find it difficult to conduct controlled burns, as the ground is often too wet to get them started.
- Evy also pointed out that a large portion of Kingston's conserved land is wetlands where wildfire is not an issue.
- In his correspondence, Greg Jordan also quoted a state statistic saying that over 90% of all NH wildfires are started by open burning by individuals on private property.
- The Commission agreed that wildfire prevention absolutely requires firefighting expertise and would recommend that the Fire Department take the lead on any related program or project.
- It was proposed that Ron Klemarczyk of Foreco be hired to create a fire access plan for each of the town forests. After some discussion it was decided that the issue of access would best be addressed by the Fire Department, as they know which specific types of equipment they would use in the event of a fire or other emergency. Mr. Klemarczyk could map the roads and mark access points, but since some of those roads are narrow, steep, and rocky in places and have narrow foot bridges, the Fire Department would still have to decide which equipment could be driven or transported. Also, since the Commission does not know how much it would cost for such an access plan, it would be better to discuss it with the Fire Department first to see if they would find such a plan helpful.
- Regarding the citizen panel, it was pointed out that the Conservation Commission is appointed by and reports to the Select Board. It is unclear what role such a panel would play and how members would be selected.
- Mr. Hart commented that he wondered why, if someone were interested in wildfire prevention, they would not first express their concerns to the Fire Department and Select Board.

Trails Committee:

- Greg reported that Peter and Ellie Coffin removed a total of 8 downed trees that fell across Valley Lane trails during one of the last storms.
- Ernie Landry gave Evy a video of Warren Whitcomb walking the trails along the Powwow River from his home to ET's Landing in the 80's, while narrating a history of the area, the original residents, and his efforts to conserve the land.

Pollinator Pathways:

- Workshops are scheduled for February and April. Topics will be pollinator garden planning and Abenaki use of native medicinal herbs.
- Presentations will be given to Greenland Conservation Commission and Newmarket CC.
- There will be a spring opening event for the Seed Library.

Old Business/Bucket List:

- Edit and reprint Trail Passport for Youth.
- Book of Conserved Properties/Granit – Evy has requested help.
- Consideration of prime wetlands designation – choose wetlands.
- Handout for town: Land use regulations and water protection, start with one next year.

Meeting adjourned at 8:03 pm

Next meeting Thursday, February 8, 6:45pm

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Foss, Secretary