

GROTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
FEBRUARY 25, 2003
MINUTES

Chairman Corwin called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.. Present were Craig Auman, Alix Chace, Bruce Clements, Peter Morrison, Kathleen O'Connor, and Evan Owen. Barbara Ganem, Conservation Assistant, was also present.

B. Ganem explained that she, C. Auman, and B. Clements met with Holly Johnson of Beals & Thomas. On the topic of the funds budgeted for updating the Open Space and Recreation Plan, H. Johnson assured the group that the firm agrees the project can be done within the budget originally proposed. If there are to be supplemental costs, she will inform the Commission ahead of time. B. Ganem reported that departmental comments have come in from everyone but the Recreation and Parks Commissions. The public forum is tentatively scheduled for April 1 at the Nashua River Watershed Association office. Commissioners agreed that this date and the draft publicity and agenda were appropriate. The Commission will welcome attendees, and the consultant will make a presentation on what the update must include, as well as facilitate discussion on important recreational needs, distinctive landscapes, priority open space parcels, and the development of a vision for the next five years. Commissioners will help with smaller group discussions on these specific topics.

C. Auman expressed concern that the Salmon Brook Charette, scheduled for March 15th, appears to cover much of the same material and will attract a similar audience as the one the Commission is planning for April 1. Because the emphasis of the Charette will be on the Salmon Brook watershed only, K. Corwin suggested that these two workshops could complement one another. Based on the map showing the extent of the Salmon Brook watershed in Groton previously distributed to members, E. Owen made a motion to appropriate \$300 to fund a facilitator for the Charette which was seconded by B. Clements. P. Morrison noted that Groton's citizens may not be well served by this expenditure, and he prefers to see Commission funds expended for land acquisitions. He pointed out that it is imperative to make our money count toward what we say we are doing especially when things are so bleak. E. Owen amended his motion to allocate \$100, seconded by B. Clements, and the amendment failed, with K. O'Connor, A. Chace, K. Corwin, and C. Auman voting in the negative. On the original motion,

To appropriate \$300 to fund a facilitator for the March 15 Salmon Brook Charette.

With only E. Owen and B. Clements voting in the affirmative, the motion failed.

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) has confirmed that the Commission is on their agenda for their February 26th meeting. Commissioners suggested that it would be helpful to prepare a summary sheet of the Wetlands Protection Bylaw to give the ZBA. It should include the presumption of vernal pool habitat unless proven otherwise, no buildings within 100' of wetlands, no disturbance within 50' of wetlands, no new utilities located in wetlands, no septic system grading within 100', and the inclusion of the 200' riverfront area as a resource area. Commissioners requested that this information sheet be available by e-mail and in the Commission mailbox.

The Planning Board has requested comments on proposed modifications to the Academy Hill subdivision plans. The modification includes the removal of turtle barriers and tunnels and installation of gates at the ends of Rose Crest Dr. This roadway would be used for emergency access, as well as by school buses. Without hearing more details about the rationale for eliminating the turtle barriers and tunnels, Commissioners felt it was inappropriate to comment at this time.

The Selectmen have requested comments on the proposed Ch.40B project, Oak Ridge Estates, at 933 Boston Road. K. Corwin noted that she has received a credible report about the presence of salamanders near the wetland crossing in April 2000. After reviewing the preliminary plan, Commissioners noted that the location of the detention basin and grading is within 100 feet of wetland resources, in violation of the Wetlands Protection Bylaw. K. Corwin commented that this site should be added to our list of sites to visit in April. Based on the submitted plans, it is unclear how water mains will be brought in. The Bylaw allows no new utilities to cross wetlands. Also, there appear to be discrepancies in the amount of buildable land on the site as two different figures are presented in the application. C. Auman pointed out

that plans should have the wetland delineation and proposed structures on the same sheet. B. Ganem will send a follow-up memo to the Selectmen.

The Occupancy Permit for 151 Gratuity Rd. is being circulated among town departments. Because the Order of Conditions (#169-791) for this property includes wetland replication to compensate for a wetlands crossing, B. Ganem has not signed off. To assure that the applicant/builder complies with all of the conditions, she suggested that the new owner sign a successor letter, acknowledging their responsibility to satisfy the conditions. Commissioners agreed to sign off on the Occupancy Permit, conditional upon receiving the successor letter.

In response to an inquiry from Al Futterman at the Nashua River Watershed Association, the Commission agreed to allow the November 13, 2002 letter of support (to the EPA) to accompany a more recent grant application to the Massachusetts Environmental Trust.

Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by K. O'Connor, it was

VOTED: to approve the minutes of February 11, 2003, as amended.

A. Chace read her draft for the Bylaw changes, and after discussion, Commissioners felt that the change could be accomplished by modifying Section 215-7A Prohibited Activity.2 to state "Erection of structures, including, but not limited to, barns, garages, or attached structures" and Section 215-7A.3 to state "Construction of parking lots/driveways or use of land for parking of motor vehicles". In addition, a 7th item will be added to the list of Prohibited Activity as follows: "Grading except for minor grading changes as defined in the Regulations". B. Ganem will check with the town attorney on the wording. Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by E. Owen, it was

VOTED: to submit as a warrant article the following modifications of the Groton

Wetlands Protection Bylaw:

- 1.) CHANGE Section 215-7A Prohibited Activity 2 from "Erection of permanent buildings, including, but not limited to, barns, garages, or attached structures" TO "Erection of structures, including, but not limited to, barns, garages, or attached structures";
- 2.) CHANGE Section 215-7A Prohibited Activity 3 from "Construction of parking lots or use of land for parking of motor vehicles" TO "Construction of parking lots/driveways or use of land for parking of motor vehicles"
- 3.) ADD to Section 215-7A Prohibited Activity #7 "Grading except for minor grading as defined in the Regulations"

B. Ganem noted that at the town meeting held in April 2002, three modifications were approved. The Conservation Commission web site, however, does not reflect these changes. Commissioners advised her to check with Town Clerk to get the most up-to-date version. In addition, the Commission may want to consider defining how to determine the boundary by the mean annual high water line for vernal pools in the preparation of the Bylaw Regulations. K. Corwin said that vernal pools are usually at their fullest in spring.

E. Owen reported that Bob Lacombe has offered to donate and engrave a stone in memory of the Hanson family at Flavell Crossing. Commissioners agreed that this is a wonderful idea, and a letter should go to Mr. Lacombe asking for a plan of the wording to be engraved and the proposed location.

C. Auman is planning to attend the February 27th meeting of the Planning Board to discuss proposed amendments to the Subdivision Regulations, in particular signage for open space deeded through the subdivision review process.

Commissioners reviewed and changed some of the wording in the draft Regulations to accompany the Groton Wetlands Protection Bylaw, beginning with Section 7-4. The fee structure has previously been reviewed and approved, and it was suggested that copies of the revised portions of the Regulations that have been approved should be available to the Commission.

In other business, B. Ganem pointed out that a new flood study is being prepared for Groton and asked if there were any areas of concern which the Commission would like to bring to the consultant's attention. E. Owen commented that the accuracy of and/or missing registered benchmarks is a problem.

In response to the stewardship proposal e-mailed from Rick Muelke, President of the Groton Conservation Trust, B. Clements pointed out that it would be a good opportunity to have the Trust, the Commission, and the Trails Committee work together. K. O'Connor observed that the names of GCC associate members could be conveyed to the Trust. Other Commissioners were concerned that there is currently a lack of volunteers to monitor land managed by the Conservation Commission. Stewardship would be mainly monitoring and record keeping, but could include trail clearing and maintenance, land stewardship, historical research, boundary maintenance, documenting flora and fauna, invasive species identification and control, vernal pool protection, wetlands, and endangered species. No funds are requested, but they are asking for Commission support of the concept. After discussion, A. Chace made a motion, seconded by E. Owen, and it was

VOTED: to respond to the Trust President, stating that the Groton Conservation Commission is willing to co-sponsor, with the Groton Conservation Trust and the Groton Trails Committee, a "Stewards Meeting" to organize volunteers for the maintenance of conservation lands in Groton.

K. O'Connor abstained from the vote.

P. Morrison noted that he would inform the Town Accountant and Finance Committee that there are probably going to be state funding sources available this year. Regarding the \$200,000 amount proposed for the Conservation Fund, he requested that Commissioners send him information in support of the Conservation Fund.

Commissioners discussed whether it would be worthwhile to have the new aerial map mounted and laminated. Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by C. Auman it was

VOTED: to authorize the expenditure of \$92.00 to mount and laminate the aerial map.

Previously, the Commission has discussed projects for volunteer Eagle Scouts. B. Ganem reported that the scout leader has asked that the projects be firmed up now as the boys will need to do a presentation on their planned project. The actual work will not be done until May or June.

E. Owens said that he would be willing to work with the boys on installing a terrace at Kailey's Way and cleaning up invasives at Sorhaug Woods. It was noted that the Groton Electric Light Co. may have spare electric light poles available to use as stairs.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara V. Ganem
Conservation Assistant

Approved 3/11/03