

GROTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Minutes

Friday, August 15, 2014

Chairman John Smigelski called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. with Peter Morrison (Vice Chairman), Susan Black (Clerk), Rena Swezey, Bruce Easom, and Mary Metzger present. Marshall Giguere was absent. Conservation Administrator Takashi Tada was present.

The Commissioners took up the issuance of an Order of Conditions for Sargisson Beach Restoration Project, DEP #169-1112. T. Tada gave an update on the bidders conference that was held August 6, 2014 with a handful of potential contractors in attendance. One of the issues that came up involves early drawdown of the water level in Lost Lake/Knops Pond. The Sargisson Beach Committee (SBC) would like the drawdown to begin immediately after Labor Day on September 2nd. SBC wants to give the chosen contractor ample time this fall to perform the restoration work.

There have been a number of complaints from lake residents about the proposed early drawdown. The Lost Lake dam is currently owned by the Town through the Board of Selectmen, and the boards at the dam spillway are removed/replaced by DPW personnel each spring/fall. Historically the drawdown process has commenced on Columbus Day. According to R. Swezey, the previous owners of the dam (Grotonwood) held an annual fall festival on Columbus Day weekend and then would begin the lowering afterward. As the process is not controlled by the Conservation Commission, there is no need to specify a drawdown date in the Order of Conditions.

The Commission reviewed the draft Special Conditions under the Wetlands Protection Act (WPA) and the Groton Wetlands Protection Bylaw (Bylaw).

Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by R. Swezey, it was

VOTED: to issue the Order of Conditions under the WPA for Sargisson Beach Restoration, DEP #169-1112, as amended.

The vote was unanimous.

Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by S. Black, it was

VOTED: to issue the Order of Conditions under the Bylaw for Sargisson Beach Restoration, DEP #169-1112, as written.

The vote was unanimous.

Moving on to the Order of Conditions for 61 Ridgewood Avenue, DEP #169-1111, the Commission reviewed the draft Special Conditions under the Wetlands Protection Act (WPA) and the Groton Wetlands Protection Bylaw (Bylaw).

Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by R. Swezey, it was

VOTED: to issue the Order of Conditions under the WPA for 61 Ridgewood Avenue, DEP #169-1111, as written.

The vote was unanimous.

Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by R. Swezey, it was

VOTED: to issue the Order of Conditions under the Bylaw for 61 Ridgewood Avenue, DEP #169-1111, as written.

The vote was unanimous.

Moving on to General Business – Land Acquisition, the Commission reviewed a letter from Carol Van Patten, Executrix of the Schofield Estate, in response to the Commission's initial offer to purchase the Schofield Parcel (Groton Assessors' Parcel 251-71). Ms. Van Patten's counter-offer asked for twelve buildable house lots (two acres each), in addition to the purchase price. The Commissioners agreed that they could not realistically consider this counter-offer. T. Tada will send a formal letter to Ms. Van Patten.

The Commission also reviewed a letter from realtor Georgi Mueller, representing the Cutler family. The Cutlers offered to sell approximately eight acres of Parcel 104-2 (Hill Road) to the Conservation Commission for \$48,000. The land is mostly wet and not buildable; it abuts Integrity Way and Fox Run Conservation Areas. The Commissioners agreed that it was not a priority acquisition at this time. T. Tada will respond with a letter.

Moving on to other General Business, B. Easom provided an update on the Community Preservation Committee (CPC). At its last meeting the CPC denied the Commission's request to submit an out-of-cycle application for the purpose of replenishing the Conservation Fund. A majority of the CPC members did not think the request merited consideration outside of the normal cycle. Also denied was a request from the Trails Committee. The Sargisson Beach Committee's request was approved. A majority of CPC members believed the cost savings and reduction in environmental impacts that would be gained by fully funding the Sargisson Beach restoration project this year merited consideration outside the normal cycle.

On another General Business topic, P. Morrison suggested the Commission compile a current list of priority parcels for acquisition, as a way of planning for potential mitigation of the natural gas pipeline proposed by Kinder Morgan Energy Partners. The list should include property

descriptions, estimated values, compelling features, etc. Properties mentioned during the ensuing discussion include:

- Schofield Parcel – see above.
- Harvey Parcels (West Groton) – Commission made initial offer to the Harveys, which was rejected. No counter-offer received.
- Autumn Hill Orchard – R. Swezey said the owners could be looking to sell in the near future.
- Valerie Best Parcel (formerly Harlan Fitch) – B. Easom said this parcel connects Williams Barn-Sorhaug Woods to Longley Road. This is the highest priority parcel from the perspective of trails connectivity.
- Decilio Parcel – T. Tada mentioned this parcel that has over 1,000 feet of frontage along the Nashua River and abuts Ames Meadow Conservation Area.
- Brooks Orchard – This former orchard is owned by Steve Webber and has an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) on a portion of it.

On the topic of Land Management, the Commission discussed Bay State Forestry's vegetation management proposal for Baddacook Field. S. Black said she would like the Commission to consider alternative approaches to the proposal outlined by Bay State (cutting this fall, followed by herbicide application next year). She mentioned Brooks Orchard as one example of a field that was restored over several years by mechanical removal of invasive plants with some winter burning of certain plants. Commissioners agreed that it would be beneficial to have a Town employee licensed to apply herbicides. T. Tada will contact DPW Director Tom Delaney about this. M. Metzger said she was organizing some of the neighbors to help cut back the Japanese knotweed by hand; she asked if this should be approved by the Commission.

Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by R. Swezey, it was

VOTED: to authorize M. Metzger to organize volunteers to hand-cut invasive knotweed at Baddacook Field.

On the topic of the GELD Building on Station Avenue, T. Tada asked if the Commission would authorize the removal of the one remaining maple tree within the construction zone. During the permitting process, the Commission had requested that two maple trees be left in place. Subsequently, both trees appeared to be damaged or diseased. The Commission previously gave approval to remove the damaged tree. GELD has asked for permission to remove the diseased tree as well.

Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by R. Swezey, it was

VOTED: to authorize GELD to remove the diseased maple tree, under the condition that GELD plant two red maple trees after completion of construction.

There being no further business, upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by R. Swezey, it was

VOTED: to adjourn the meeting at 10:10 a.m.

The vote was unanimous.

Notes taken by

Takashi Tada
Conservation Administrator

Exhibits on file at Conservation Commission Office:

1. Order of Conditions, Sargisson Beach Restoration, DEP #169-1112
2. Order of Conditions, 61 Ridgewood Avenue, DEP #169-1111

Approved 8/26/2014