

GROTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 9, 2018

Location: Town Hall 2nd Floor
Members Present: John Smigelski (Chair), Peter Morrison (Vice Chair), Larry Hurley (Clerk), Eileen McHugh, Olin Lathrop, Bruce Easom, Marshall Giguere
Members absent: None
Others Present: Nikolis Gualco (Conservation Administrator)
Elizabeth Faxon (Per Diem Minute Taker, Town of Groton)

7:00 p.m. - The meeting was called to order by John Smigelski.

The Commission began with General Business, and reviewed the Meeting minutes from the December 26th, 2017 meeting. Upon a motion by O. Lathrop, seconded by M. Giguere it was:

VOTED : to approve and release the minutes as drafted from the December 26th, 2017 meeting.
The vote passed with four in favor and three (J. Smigelski, E. McHugh, P. Morrison) abstaining.

The Commission continued with General Business, Correspondences and reviewed an email from Beth Faxon regarding the future use of audio recording at Conservation meetings for the purposes of writing the draft Conservation Commission meeting minutes. The Committee discussed the use of an audio recording of Conservation open meetings, noting that as part of the Open Meeting Law, audio recordings are currently allowed by all, with notification of the Chairman. J. Smigelski questioned the process for responsible handling of these Conservation audio files after the meetings, his concern is with the public accessibility and proper archiving of the file. There was also a question of which account of the meeting, the audio file or the approved meeting minutes, would be considered the primary source in any legal proceedings. Discussion continued that the GCC audio file could be held by the Conservation Administrator and treated in the same way as the Minute taker's personal notes, which held on file for a year. N. Gualco will work on clarifying the process and protocol for the next meeting.

The Commission then continued with General Business, Correspondences and discussed the Draft 2017 Annual Report - Conservation Commission, said report is to be presented to the

Board of Selectmen on February 5th, 2018. O. Lathrop noted a correction in 2nd paragraph (misspelling of Groton Hills Conservation Area), and asked that invasive species progress be added and detailed in this section. E. McHugh referred to the BOS request of the Commission to set goals as a Committee for stewardship and management of town owned land prior to further acquisitions. A Commissioner put forth the idea of publishing an organized packet of town owned Conservation land, including maps and general description of parcels. Commissioners agreed this is a good idea. N. Gualco will take action on this project. Discussion as to the reasonability of actively managing open space versus leaving it natural ensued. B. Easom summed up some of the benefits open space including watershed protection, recreation, stormwater runoff and wildlife habitat, generally commenting that this should be recognized as substantial benefit to the Town. M. Giguere cited citizen surveys which clearly confirmed the townspeople's opinion of the importance of Conservation land and protecting the environment. E. McHugh, in agreement added that the commission is managing invasive species in many of said areas, and reminded us to consider that a way of managing wetlands is by acquisition and protection. She would like to have more information about the commission's goals and activities with regards to open space management in the annual report.

The Commission then continued with General Business, Correspondences and discussed Forest Cutting Plan: Hayes Family Real Estate Trust. Commissioners referenced the letter from Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. The Commission reviewed a map of the project. The Commission is satisfied with the conditions outlined in said letter, including a 50' no cut buffer zone around designated vernal pools, 100' marked field delineation prior to tree cutting, 450' marked field delineation for the Salamander Life Zone within which tree harvesting will proceed to maintain >70% of the area with >65% tree canopy cover. Discussion continued with regards to Natural Heritage having sufficiently reviewed the forest cutting plan, which all were seemingly in agreement.

7:15 p.m. - Public Hearing: NOI 419 Old Ayer Road for the installation of a septic system and well, MassDEP 169-1168.

Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by O. Lathrop it was

VOTED: to continue the public hearing as requested by the applicant until January 23, 2018 at 7:30 p.m.

The Commission then continued to discuss Land Management. N. Gualco shared that he scheduled a site walk at Surrenden Farm West for January 16th, 2018 at 10:00 a.m. with Pat Huckery and Jennifer Jones of Mass Wildlife to discuss the terms of the forest cutting contract

and consider any new knowledge of wildlife. O. Lathrop reported on the Chestnut Tree Breeding Program located in the Farmers and Mechanics conservation area. The Invasives Species Committee is requesting that the GCC work on developing a nursery at this site.. E. McHugh asked that this activity be added to the Annual report to credit the Commission for their participation, as well as the Commissions invasive species management work at Baddacook Pond.

The Commission allowed discussion in Open session under topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance of meeting.

Present to discussion: Robert Anderson

Mr. Anderson appealed to the Commission for financial assistance in the Duck Pond Restoration Project CPA (CPA Project Application narrative is included as an attachment to these minutes). Duck Pond is experiencing rapid eutrophication and without maintenance and the proposed restoration process, we may lose this natural recreation area. Since the GCC owns 36% of the Duck Pond shoreline, Mr. Anderson is requesting their financial support. The project involves the installation and maintenance of an aeration system and periodic addition of healthy aerobic bacteria to increase the dissolved oxygen. This process will ultimately reduce the biomass of the pond, and restore the health of the ecosystem. Mr. Anderson added that the Duck Pond CPA application draft is due next week and that a verbal consensus of support would be appreciated. O. Lathrop expressed his lack of support for the project due to the pond changes are a natural geomorphology process and the landscape will not be adversely impacted. He highlighted this process (pond eutrophication) has occurred elsewhere on the same site. The Commission considered options to fund this project using various financial sources available. Various sources such as Conservation Fund, Revolving Land Management Fund, and annual expense funds were discussed. Commission requested N. Gualco prepare a comprehensive spreadsheet of the Groton Conservation available funds with current financial status to reference in future sessions.

P. Morrison raised the question of the Commission contributing \$10,000 from the Conservation Fund. N. Gualco will research the possibility of using this Fund to support the Duck Pond Restoration Project. The majority of the commissioners in favor, O. Lathrop opposed.

Following the discussion, the Commission attended to the Open Space Recreation Plan under the Other Discussions section of the meeting agenda. N. Gualco shared a document which outlines the scope of conservation services section of the draft Open Space Recreation Plan. This will be presented to Town Manager, finalized, and used to solicit a contractor to conduct the 2019 Plan update.. N. Gualco would like this finalized soon so it is ready for release to potential vendors in Spring 2018. The Commission reviewed the document of scope of conservation services and E.

McHugh requested more specifics are needed as far as qualifications, and selection criteria. E. McHugh offered assistance in this working document, as she has expertise in contract negotiation.

The GCC CPA Application for FY19 monies to be added to the Conservation was reviewed by the Commission and N. Gualco offered to distribute the 1st Draft of the final document to the CPA by the deadline of January 18, 2018.

The Commission then attended to Upcoming Events/Conferences. The Annual Groton Conservation Meeting will occur February 15, 2018 at the Media Center at Lawrence Academy. O. Lathrop encouraged all to attend noting the goal of promoting unity and communication of the shared interest conservation agencies in the Town of Groton (GCC, GCT, Trails). Groton Conservation Commission is scheduled to host the 2019 Annual conservation meeting. Feedback from previous years was that this meeting improved cooperation and communication among conservation and resource protection organizations.

The Committee heard the following under General business, Invoices: N. Gualco will attend a *MSMCP* workshop on January 24, 2018. N. Gualco will also use available funds for the Conservation Administrator to purchase boots.

7:58 p.m. - P. Morrison made a motion to adjourn the public meeting and reconvene in Executive session pursuant to MGL Ch. 30A, Sec., 21(6) in the first floor meeting room. Seconded by M. Giguere (**YES: OL, BE, MG, EM, LH, PM, JS**).

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Faxon, Per Diem Minute Taker, Town of Groton

Exhibits on file at Groton Conservation Commission office:

1. Draft 2017 Annual Report - Conservation Commission
2. DCR Forest Cutting Plan: Hayes family real estate trust
 - a. Attachment: Letter; Division of Fisheries & Wildlife reference: Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program review.
3. CPA Application Draft: Duck Pond restoration project
 - a. Attachment: email from Bob Anderson dated January 8, 2018 with eight (8) attachments.
4. OSRP Scope of Services Draft

Approved: January 23, 2018