

Cornish Conservation Commission Minutes  
August 23, 2017

Present: Jim Barker, Bill Gallagher, Dale Rook, Reyer Jaarsma, Steven Wilkie, Stuart Wilkie, Bob Taylor, Corey Fitch, Jenny Schad. Visitor: Kimberly Patterson

Not present: Deanna Fitch, John Hammond, Rickey Poor

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm by Jim Barker, Chair.

Corey moved to approve the July meeting minutes as amended; Bill seconded, approved unanimously.

Topical Reports:

Monitoring: Nothing new to report.

Education/GPS: (Corey) The date of the GPS class has been changed to October 14<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 a.m. starting in the cafeteria of the school. The notice will go out in Connect Cornish soon. Corey has talked with Andrew about his recommended GPS apps for the class but all the better ones cost some money. There are some apps that will be recommended to attendees and they can decide which, if any, to download for their own use.

Jim mentioned that Bill Lipfert had offered to host a hike on Bill's property, and the date of October 14<sup>th</sup> had been proposed. Jim has reached out to Bill a couple of times but hasn't heard back from him as of yet. If Bill is still interested in hosting the hike on his property, Jim suggested that the hike could take place the afternoon of the GPS class that morning, perhaps starting at 1:00, so that participants in the class could go on the hike and practice some trail mapping if they desired.

Education Boards: Jim has paint to give to Kim for the bulletin boards.

State of New Hampshire has changed regulations regarding Right-To-Know, Meetings Open to the Public – but we have already been in compliance for a while as Jim always posts our meeting minutes on the town website within a few days of final approval each month.

Jim asked if we should spend our energies on putting the town owned thirty-something acres on Jackson Road, part of which is wetlands. Although it is currently town owned it might be in the best interest of the town to conserve and protect it now against possible change in future use or ownership. Jim suggested that a couple of volunteers take our criteria for conserving wetlands and determine if it's worth pursuing. Bill and Steve will take that on and report back at the October meeting.

Bill mentioned that biologist Skip Lisle from Grafton, VT – “protecting infrastructures and ecosystems” – is familiar with some of the wetlands in Cornish including at CREA and on Jackson Road. More information on Skip and his mission can be found at [www.beaverdeceivers.com](http://www.beaverdeceivers.com) or (802) 843-1017

One of the field trip options during the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests Annual Meeting in Claremont on Saturday September 16<sup>th</sup> will be to the Cornish Town Forest and the Cornish Arts Colony between 11:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Jim anticipates their arriving at the Town Forest around 12:30 p.m. that day. Ginny will lead the hike. Three or four of the Commission members reported they will attend so the CCC will definitely have representation on the hike.

Ron Rhodes, River Steward, from the Connecticut River Conservancy (formerly Connecticut River Watershed Council) sent an e-mail to Jim which Jim forwarded to the members of the Commission informing all of clean-up efforts taking place around the River in Cornish on Friday September 15<sup>th</sup>

(Sumner Falls to Cornish) and on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> (meet in Cornish and do clean up around the covered bridge area). Wayne Gray said that if the trash is put on a town road, he will ensure it gets picked up. Ron is checking with the state to see if they would pick up trash left on the state road. Jim will attend the cleanup session on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Other members are invited to attend one or both of the cleanup days.

Steve reported that the Cornish Selectboard is concerned about more beaver dam activity at CREA. Steve, Larry Duval, and Jimmy Fitch met at CREA and decided that on September 4<sup>th</sup> another beaver baffle will be installed. Also, there is another beaver dam that has been built in a culvert on Tandy Brook Road that needs to be evaluated and addressed. Steve will be looking at within the week and will evaluate for necessary mitigation steps.

Steve talked about the Wetland Committee getting someone to fly a drone over all of the wetlands and beaver areas in Cornish and record video so that we can evaluate the current condition of all our wetlands and come up with any corrective or preventative plans necessary and then continue to monitor those via drone on a regular basis.

There was some discussion about the kiosk that will be built as part of an Eagle Scout project and where the kiosk should be installed. Due to past vandalism of the previous signage, Jimmy Fitch would like just a small sign (instead of the larger kiosk) right at the beaver baffle identifying it as such. But we still would want the kiosk with the information about the baffle along with other CREA information someplace else on the CREA property. We would still like to have the Fish and Game Warden, Kevin Bronson, come and speak at the dedication of the kiosk and then people can walk to the beaver baffle(s) at the CREA property where, perhaps, someone else can speak about beavers and damage mitigation efforts including the use of baffles.

Climate Change Report: Bill shared information about a government report that came out a couple of weeks ago about climate change and how it affects us here in New England and specifically Cornish. It was reported that we could expect an increase as much as 25% in intensity of rainstorms. We should do what we can now to be prepared for dramatic weather events in the future due to climate change.

Regarding whether or not to make the Selectboard representative to the Commission an official voting member. Multiple options were discussed. Dale made a motion, Steve seconded, that we retain our current wording in the by-laws that a "Selectboard member serve as an ex-officio non-voting member of the Commission." The motion passed.

In preparation of our conservation easements discussion, Jim did some research into the acreage within Cornish currently under conservation easement or other type of protection. Cornish is 42 square miles, or 26,880 acres, which includes Blue Mountain Forest Association ("BMFA" formerly known as Corbin Park). There are currently conservation easements on 3,169 acres or 11.7% via any one of numerous organizations including the CCC. There are other parcels of land that are currently under other types of protection (Claremont owned, Cornish owned, State owned boat launch, Town Forest – 276 acres, Federal Land (Saint-Gaudens and Blow-Me-Down Farm), Deming Memorial Park on Beechwood, NH State Forest, etc.) What should our goal of 25% of land in conservation easement actually include? What lands should be included? (All land in the town will be counted towards the total acreage including BMFA.) There are a few more properties that Jim will add to the conserved list, and he will update the spreadsheet and determine what percentage we are currently at when including these additional parcels.

## Set Goals & Objectives:

Conservation Plan: The top three focuses for our work going forward in the immediate future will be:

- 1) Three to Four Educational Seminars per year for the general public –
  - a. October 2017 - GPS Seminar
  - b. March 2018 – (Corey)
  - c. Late Spring 2018? – (Steve)
  - d. Summer 2018? – (Jen)
  
- 2) Develop a plan for the management and protection of the town watersheds and for handling pollution
  - a. What should be our goal? 1) Education and 2) Monitoring
    - i. Perform our duties so that the citizenry assumes stewardship of the watersheds that provide their water and where it goes. Teach people how to discover one's personal "watershed address"
    - ii. Focus on education – including how to report when something appears awry
    - iii. Perhaps add a monitoring component as well – some even focused on monitoring after a special event such as a flood
    - iv. "Best Watershed Management Practices" training for homeowners
    - v. Program on beavers and the flood control they provide
    - vi. Maybe provide links to videos, etc. that might educate people on various related topics
    - vii. Jim will submit a little blurb to Connect Cornish with a general overview of the water quality test that were recently performed (Completed)
    - viii. Maybe something educational at the Cornish Fair. Years ago the Conservation Commission would show educational films in the school library during the Fair at certain scheduled times. We should aim for something for the 2018 Fair. Even an education board in the CREA parking lot across from the school.
    - ix. Look for photos from the 1973 flood

Discussion ensued regarding what our plans should be and concluded the following:

### Monitoring Plan:

How often should we water test? Now we have a baseline. Perhaps every 2-3 years is a good target providing we can fund it. Test the same streams we recently tested – so again in 2019 or 2020.

### Education Plan: (offer 3-4 education seminars per year)

Personal Watershed Address: wells, septic, agricultural uses, contaminated properties, micro-farming regulations, (perhaps New Hampshire Cooperative Extension might have someone who could speak for us on this topic). Target date: March 2018 Maybe have someone talk about organic gardening as well.

Corey is going to create a survey listing potential topics for education seminars which will be distributed via Connect Cornish. Hopefully the results from that survey will provide some valuable information regarding what topics people are most interested in for Conservation Commission education seminars. That will help us determine future topics.

3) Identify types of land or specific parcels of land that should be targeted for conservation and work with landowners to obtain easements.

a. What should be some of our goals and objectives:

i. Get to 25% of land into conservation easement asap

Increase the wildlife corridor outside the park.

Look at places where there are already large parcels conserved and tacking on to those.

Are there any areas in the town that aren't conserved that we should focus on now?

Should we talk with the planning board to see where people tend to want to build homes to see if some of those places might be better conserved than built up? (Jim will follow up.)

Put as much agricultural land into easement as possible to preserve it.

Look at our current priorities for selecting conservation targets.

It would be nice to have an information packet to give to a prospective landowner whose property we want to target for conservation easement who has shown an interest in conserving some of their land.

It was agreed that we can send a passive, soft-approach letter to targeted property owners and leave it up for them to reply either via enclosed postcard, phone, or e-mail. Jim will draft a potential letter that could be personalized with contiguous property owners' names.

At the next meeting the Commission will review the town map to choose targeted parcels of property for conservation easement.

Jim asked Kim Patterson to join the Commission as an alternate member. Dale moved, Corey seconded, to recommend to the Selectboard that Kim Patterson become an alternative member of the Commission. Approved unanimously.

Bill mentioned that from September 19-22 there will be a draft horse weekend including logging at the Cornish Fair Grounds.

The handbook for Conservation Commission members is being updated so any necessary revisions should be submitted asap.

Bill moved and Dale seconded to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 8:52 p.m. by unanimous vote.

Respectively submitted,  
Stuart Wilkie  
Secretary