CCC MINUTES

Public Hearing

Wednesday, September 28, 2022,

6:45pm Town of Cornish Offices, 2nd floor and via ZOOM

*\*The notice to this public hearing is attached to these minutes.*

**Attending**

**CCC Members**: Corey Fitch, Chair; Jody Schubert, Co-Chair; Linda Leone, Secretary; Cindy Heath (via Zoom); Reyer Jaarsma; Glenn Griffin (left the meeting early)

**CCC Alternate Members**: Rickey Poor, Bob Taylor

**Guest via Zoom:**

Brian Hotz, Vice President - Land Conservation, The Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests

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1. 6:45pm Call to Order by Corey Fitch.
2. Cole Property
	1. Corey Fitch introduced the Coles and indicated that the large size of the parcel, its abutting the Yatsevitch Forest, its many habitats within and public recreation opportunities are among the reasons the Cornish Conservation Commission (CCC) is excited about the easement.
	2. The Coles addressed the group, and:
		1. Outlined the history of their land and homestead.
		2. Described their reasoning behind putting the land in conservation: to stabilize the land in a responsible way will maintain its integrity; preserve its contributions to the biodiversity of the ecology, as a carbon sink in these times of climate change, and keep it available to the public for recreation, enjoyment and education in Cornish.
	3. Brian Hotz explained SPNHF’s decision to conserve the land: It enhances and enlarges existing conservation land in the Yatsevitch Forest and fits into SPNHF’s conservation strategy. He said that SPNHF is very grateful for the Coles' donation of the land easement and that SPNHF and the town of Cornish will provide funding for the expenses involved in this transaction. The land itself will be resold sometime; the house/barns will be excluded from the easement so the new owner would have the flexibility to make changes to fit their needs, within the limits set by the conditions of the easement.. Brian expressed appreciation that the Conservation Commission has been helpful during the process so far and a good working partner.
	4. Public Comment.
		1. Leo Maslan: He noted that there is waterflow off the property feeding the north hill watershed and to the east side and asked how does the Forest Management Plan reflect this. Brian replied that there’s no forestry being done at this time, and it would be likely that the new owner would bring in their own forester and redo the forest management plan; such a plan is required before any commercial forestry is undertaken.
		2. Bill Gallagher: spoke on how great a benefit to the Town and residents this conservation easement will be.
		3. Jennifer Wightman: she asks that when the land sells, what kinds of changes can a new owner implement under a new forest management plan? Brian replied that the conservation easement terms do not change, but a new owner can work with his licensed forester and clear land to add fields or do a commercial forest – a new forest management plan would be developed to extend over a 10-15 year period. Certain objectives or side bars are laid out in the easement to protect the natural resources of the land.
		4. Keith Beardsley: He asked for clarification of easement holders. Corey and Brian responded: SPNHF is primary holder or grantee of easement; Town of Cornish is executory holder; the Coles still hold the land until it may be sold, and the Town will continue to work closely with the family. If SPNHF fails to manage the easement effectively, the Town would have the right to enforce the easement.
		5. Jody: She asked whether SPNHF had ever defaulted on managing an easement? Brian answered “no” and described the staffing and volunteering in place that makes their work successful.
		6. Jennifer Wightman: She asked Corey out of CCC’s goal of putting 25% of total Cornish acreage under easement, how much is currently under easement. Corey said the percentage is estimated at 10-15%.
		7. Jennifer Wightman: She asked how the human “edges” of the easement boundaries (Coles’, Yatsevitch and others) relate to each other - is there any management coordination? Brian responded: sometimes its state ownership, sometimes its private - they all may be managed differently. SPNHF is just beginning to coordinate management among owners in New Hampshire but this will be of more and more importance, particularly in view of the impacts we will face due to climate change.
		8. Walter Scott: Will the snowmobile trail continue? Jerri said they’ve been in touch with the snowmobile club and/or state and will honor that arrangement at this time. They have decided to continue to monitor the use and husbandry of the trail, and were concerned about finding trash left behind by snowmobilers. This is not part of the easement, and if the land is sold, will be in the hands of a future landowner. Brian clarified that language in the easement relative to public access is for pedestrian use only; however a snowmobile agreement may or may not be allowed depending on the owner, and perhaps on a personal permission basis only .
		9. Leo Maslan: He asked how funding is being raised to pay these expenses. Brian answered that expenses related to the conservation easement such as the survey, title, legal costs, appraisal, hazardous waste review, etc. are about $75,000. SPNHF will seek to raise funds privately locally (including Cornish); the CCC will reserve up to ½ of $75,000 ($37,500) and make that available to make up any difference that SPNHF can not raise. The CCC fund is around $180,000 at this time and a disbursement of these funds may be approved solely by the CCC.
		10. Keith Beardsley asked how much tax revenue would be forfeited by the Town when this land is conserved. Brian said that since the land is under current use, any change in tax value would be negligible.
3. Adjournment. Corey adjourned the meeting at 7:30pm.

***\*Cornish Conservation Commission
Public Hearing***

***Wednesday, September 28 at 6:45 pm
second floor of the Town Offices at 488 Town House Road (and via Zoom)***

*Wally and Jerri Cole wish to donate a conservation easement on their property in Cornish, NH. Over the last several months the Coles have been working with members of the Cornish Conservation Commission and the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests to explore how to conserve their land. The Coles (WJ Cole Trust) own a 230 acre property between Paget and Dodge Hollow Roads. After considerable discussions, the Coles have offered to donate a conservation easement on approx. 203 acres of their property if the Forest Society and the Conservation Commission will cover the associated project costs. The Coles would like the Forest Society to hold primary or Grantee interest and the Town to hold a backup or executory interest in the conservation easement.*

*The Forest Society and the Town of Cornish will cover all project costs related to the creation of the donated conservation easement. The project expenses will include survey, title report, environmental assessment, legal costs, staff time, appraisal and stewardship fees. The estimated costs of all the project cost is approximately $75,000. The Forest Society will conduct a local fundraising effort and the proposal is to have the Conservation Commission use funds from their Conservation Fund to cover up to $37,500 or half of the expected costs.*

*This hearing is open to the public. All are welcome.*

***View Proposed Easement Info, Maps, Budget and Zoom Info
at bit.ly/cornishconservation***