

Minutes from June 9, 2022 Conservation Meeting

Attending: Ralph Lutjen, Ted Slater, Noreen Downs, Marcia McKenna

Also attending: Michael Mosher

Meeting called to order at 7:01

Alternates were elevated to full member status

This meeting was called to discuss new developments concerning the McNair Easement. Before addressing that agenda item, Ralph suggested filing a 91-A request to further investigate the status of the conservation funds. Noreen went on to explain the research she had done, with the help of Linda Shackford, into the current balances of the funds. Noreen compiled spread sheets and felt confident the expenditures and deposits were now understood, accounted for and corrected. Noreen volunteered to bring account reports to the board every month. We also want to have account balances included on the monthly meeting agenda.

Noreen also cited the RSA which states the monies collected from the Land Use Change Tax should be deposited upon collection directly into the LUCT account. We will request this be done quarterly to help accommodate staffing issues within the town office.

We also discussed merging the Conservation Commission Account which is an account left over from the commissions inception, and the gift account. This would eliminate one small unused account.

The individual accounts were reviewed and their funding sources identified:

Conservation Budget: voted by taxpayers at town meeting

Capital Reserve: contribution voted by taxpayers at town meeting

Forest Management: revenue received from timber harvesting/forest management activities on conservation properties

Land Use Change Tax: revenue received from developer/buyer as land is changed from current use to fully taxable land(50%)

Gift Account: individual donations

Our two largest accounts are not derived from taxpayers. We have been conservative spending from these accounts to fund an important land acquisition like The Chain of Ponds.

We also briefly discussed the brine truck and boat ramp/ dam repair. These projects were brought to the commission by the selectman rep, Bill Lord. He thought these were appropriate projects for the commission to discuss because of their inherent nature. At the time, the quote for the boat ramp/dam repair was \$15,000. We voted to contribute \$7,500. The quote for the brine truck was \$10,000. We voted to contribute \$5,000.

We agreed to continue the fund discussion at the next monthly meeting.

We moved on to the discussion of the McNair Easement. Noreen researched the owners of the other easements covered under the single McNair Easement document. The parcels are owned by three McNair siblings. Noreen spoke to one individual who gave her verbal consent to strengthen the easement. Although she

stated she could not speak for the others, she thought they too would also be in agreement. Because of a family wedding, those individuals could not be reached before tonight's meeting. The loggers, Fadden and Whittaker, have already given consent to amend the easement.

This development brought the discussion of trying to preserve a buffer around Durgin Pond back into consideration. The arguments for preservation and those against preservation of a buffer were discussed at length.

For buffer preservation:

- Enforces best management practices (BMP) for riparian areas

- Preserves our trail around the pond

- Preserves habitat (especially at this crucial breeding time)

- Preserves the aesthetics of the area (knowing the McNairs never allowed heavy logging around the pond and following the implied intent of the original easement)

- Having the easement amended will keep the buffer protected for the future.

Against buffer preservation:

- We do not have all owners agreement to amend the easement.

- We do not know how long it will take to complete the easement amendment.

- State guidelines for logging around wetlands are sufficient.

- Trail can be remarked

- Cost to acquire standing timber

The loggers have been very patient and cooperative in working with us to achieve our goals of tightening the easement and preserving a buffer. However, they are actively logging and a decision had to be made. After discussion, a motion was made by Ralph and seconded by Noreen, to preserve a 100 foot buffer and offer \$10,000 to Fadden and Whittaker. The vote was three in favor with one abstaining.

Marcia will call Fadden and Whittaker with the commissions offer.

MCC members will move forward with the easement amendment. A template was distributed to all members provided by Abby King from Upper Saco Valley Land Trust, for review. Marcia will contact the Attorney Generals office to notify them of the changes to the easement. Town council did not anticipate any issues with the AG because the easement is being strengthened not reduced or dissolved.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:50

Minutes submitted by Marcia McKenna