

DURHAM CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Minutes to Meeting (Draft)
November 11, 2004

Meeting called to order at 7:03pm

Members Present: Dwight Baldwin, Cynthia Belowski, Beryl Harper, Jim Hellen, Duane Hyde, Peter Smith, and Kevin Webb
Excused Absence: Lee Alexander, George Thomas
Public Attendees: Mike Lynch, Bill Skinner, Dick Lord

1. New Business/Presentations

a. Mill Pond project update – Mike Lynch of the Durham Public Works (DPW) Department reported on the status of this project:

1) The Dredge and Fill application has been accepted by NHDES Wetlands Bureau as Administratively Complete. The application was assigned to Frank Richardson and a decision is expected within 60-90 days.

2) Abutters have been notified. This has generated some questions regarding the scope of the project.

3) NH Fish and Game has asked to “piggy-back” on the project, so that they can take the opportunity of the pond being drained to repair the fish ladder and do some minor dredging in the area of the ladder. The DPW has agreed to their scheduling work at the same time, but has made it clear that NH Fish and Game will be responsible for their own dredge spoils.

4) Letter from UNH President Ann Weaver Hart in response to the Town’s letter of September 21, 2004, offering the dredge spoils for construction of athletic fields was reviewed. President Hart expressed that, although the UNH Master Plan cites long term plans to invest in playing fields, the timing is not right and funding to make use of the spoils not available. Further, President Hart expressed some concern about the quality of the dredge spoils. After much discussion members of the DCC recommended to Mike that he not pursue the UNH angle further and alternatives for the dredge material be further explored.

5) Mike reviewed his list of recommended alternatives and members of the DCC added others to include: approaching Heidleberg (sp?) to see if they need more fill for their site off of Beech Hill Rd; and the City of Dover to see if they would like more fill for the site where they are depositing the Cocheco River dredge material.

b) Packer’s Falls Bridge issue – Dick Lord and Beth Olshansky were present to request that the DCC support efforts to restore the Packer’s Falls Bridge view-shed. (The group representing efforts to restore the bridge will be presenting their proposal to the Town Council Monday November 15, 2004.)

1) Dick Lord went through a PowerPoint presentation demonstrating issues posed by the new concrete bridge concerning both obstruction of views of the river and safety due to lack of visibility of oncoming cars. The presentation included a demonstration of what the proposed change to metal rails, like those over the Oyster River Bridge on Rte 108 in Durham, would look like.

2) Estimated cost for the proposed changes depending on the option used range from \$98,570 to \$128,170, plus a potential 10% increase for material cost. While there is no money in the town’s budget for this expense, Todd Selig has identified several alternative sources of money to accomplish this project. Sources include the unexpended monies in the Town’s contingency fund that the TC

recently voted to turn over to the DCC. It was believed that there was approximately \$50,000 remaining.

3) Duane Hyde, as the representative of the Land Protection Working Group, stated that due to the available funds for land protection from the bond and land use change tax the use of the unexpended contingency fund for the bridge restoration would not present a hardship this year.

4) After much discussion a motion was made and seconded to recommend to the Durham Town Council that the unexpended amount of the town's contingency fund be put towards the restoration of the Packers Falls Bridge.

5) After further discussion about whether this type of action fell into the purview of the DCC the motion passed with one abstention. The following position, to be presented by a member of the DCC to the Town Council at their meeting on Monday November 15, 2004 was outlined:

a) One of the missions of the DCC to preserve the visual landscape

b) The 2.7 acres of land just downstream from the bridge is under a conservation easement held by the DCC. The easement was accepted in part because of the scenic qualities of the area.

c) The bridge is on a road that has been designated as scenic by the town of Durham and the Lamprey River is a National Wild and Scenic River.

2. Minutes of October 14, 2004 - Approved with minor corrections.

3. Ongoing Business

a. Land Protection Working Group – The TC asked for an estimation of the expected use of the \$2.5mm land acquisition bond over the next year. Duane Hyde estimated that \$1.6mm would be needed for proposed transactions over the next 9 months.

b. Town Land-Use/Trails Subcommittee – Progress continues with site visits to properties.

4. Board and Committee Reports

No update given.

5. Other Business

a. Content of the Annual Report – Suggestions:

1) Major goals are to continue current momentum with land conservation, and complete the Town Land-Use/Trails project which will include refurbished trails and an updated brochure with map.

2) Accomplishments include much progress in land conservation, a successful Durham Day celebration at Wagon Hill Farm, and to date the Town Land-Use/Trails Subcommittee has walked 27 properties.

b. Possible Lee gravel-pit purchase by the Town of Durham – The appraisal is in and Duane Hyde will be meeting with Todd.

c. Duane Hyde distributed copies of a letter dated 14 Oct 04 from Harold Hocker representing two groups in town and asking if the Beards Pond Abutters group should meet with the DCC. Letter will be discussed at our next meeting.

6. Administrative

a. Next meeting – 9 Dec 04

Meeting adjourned at app 9:30pm (? Oops I didn't note the exact time someone else may have).