

DURHAM CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Minutes to Meeting

January 13, 2005

Meeting called to order at 7:05pm

Members Present: Dwight Baldwin, Cynthia Belowski, Beryl Harper, Jim Hellen, Duane Hyde, Peter Smith, and George Thomas
Excused Absence: Lee Alexander, Wendy Fogg, Kevin Webb
Public Attendees: Judith Spang, Bill Woodward

1. New Business/Presentations

a. Oyster River restoration project – Judith Spang reviewed the outcomes of the *Feasibility Study for Re-establishing a Navigational Channel in the Oyster River and Related Improvements of Wastewater Dilution*.

The Durham Conservation Commission endorsed the study that addressed the issues of:

- Poor navigation, due to silting in of the channel
- Potential ecosystem improvements
- Whether dredging would result in greater dilution of wastewater from the treatment plant

The study was intended to determine the feasibility of dredging the Oyster River—it is not an Environmental Impact Statement. Research showed that the dredge material is clean, and environmental and navigational benefits would probably be realized by dredging. Further research is needed, and the study team now wishes to determine if the Town would like them to pursue funding for more in depth studies and a final recommendation and plan. Funding would be sought from grant sources rather than the town. DCC agreed to discuss this issue further at a later date.

b. USA Springs groundwater withdrawal update – Bill Woodward updated the commission on the progress of this proposed large groundwater withdrawal within the Lamprey River watershed. He also appealed to the Town to send a liaison to meetings regarding this groundwater withdrawal permit. Peter Smith stated that the Town Council has sent letters regarding the Town's position on this permit and that Todd Selig would be able to share copies of those letters with Bill. Judith Spang pointed out that DES must act within the law that at this time does not protect future needs and use of groundwater supplies.

2. Minutes of December 9, 2004 - Approved with minor corrections.

3. Ongoing Business

a. Wetlands applications – Lee Alexander was not present. No new applications were filed.

b. Mill Pond – Dwight reported that Mike Lynch will attend our February meeting for an update.

There has been no response from the DES regarding our application.

c. Land Protection Working Group – Duane reported that the scenic easement at the Mill Pond Center closed. The 26 acre bargain sale conservation easement on the Merrick property, and the 21 acre Lee Well site conservation easement are both moving along.

d. Town Land Use/Trails Subcommittee – The project is proceeding along well. A draft report will be reviewed with the Parks and Recreation Department and the Conservation Commission.

Recommendations will be specific to recreational use of these properties. Duane recommended the group contact NH Natural Heritage Inventory to be sure that the trails are not in areas that may threaten

endangered/rare plant communities. Peter mentioned that the Town Council would like to know if there are properties the team would recommend for sale or development. Other issues that may be considered now or in the future included: land values for wildlife or scenic vistas; land that, given special attributes, should be recommended for protection in its natural state in perpetuity; land that should be protected to buffer a water body.

e. Wetland Issues – Cynthia reported that Sandy Crystall, from the DES Wetlands Division, plans to attend our April meeting to present the “Hows and Whys of Designating Prime Wetlands”.

Monitoring Conservation Land and Easements – This item was added to Ongoing Business. Wendy Fogg was not present to report. It was mentioned that easement properties are not part of the current Town Land Use/Trails Subcommittee research, but should be part of an ongoing stewardship program. Cynthia will contact Wendy to see if she would like some help on this project.

4. Board and Committee Reports

a. Town Council – Peter Smith confirmed that the TC has voted to make restoration to the Packers Falls Bridge. However, bids will probably come in after the March elections and it is conceivable that a new council could change position. Funding will come from the remaining \$50,000 in the Town’s contingency fund, in-kind services from the engineering firm, \$15,000 from the LRAC and the remainder from bonding authority not yet used. Directives have been clear that if the cost is less than expected the savings will apply to the bonding authority.

b. Planning Board – Kevin Webb was not present, but had asked Dwight if the Conservation Commission could prepare joint comments regarding the proposed Zoning changes. All agreed that we were not ready to make joint comments; Dwight agreed to check with Jim to see if it would be too late if comments were submitted after our next meeting.

5. Other Business

a. Moat Island camp update – Mike Lynch will send someone out to clean up the site at the end of January or early February.

b. Letter from Mr. Hocker – Mr. Hocker is in the hospital, but Dwight spoke with his wife who confirmed that they are very interested in meeting with us and will get back to us.

c. Representation on LRAC and ORWA – Cynthia reported that she has applied for appointment to the LRAC and attended her first meeting on January 11th; she will also begin attending ORWA meetings on January 28th.

6. Administrative

a. Correspondence – we received a letter from the NHDES regarding a study to identify fecal coli form bacteria sources in the Great Bay and its tributaries. It was noted that two sites in Durham had a high incidence of fecal coli form associated with dog wastes. The NHDES recommended a public outreach program regarding the proper disposal of dog wastes. The sites noted were Crommets Creek and an unnamed brook draining into Little Bay near the Buffalo Farm. There was discussion about the logic in the results, as there would not be a high concentration of dogs in this rural area.

b. Next meeting – 10 February 05

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 PM