

Approved - June 11, 2009

**Durham Conservation Commission
Meeting Minutes of Thursday May 14, 2009
Durham Town Office – Council Chambers
7:00 PM**

Regular Members Present: Stephen Roberts, Jerry Needell, George Thomas, Beryl Harper, Dwight Baldwin, Jamie Houle, Larry Harris

Alternate Members Present: Ann Welsh, Stephen Burns, Peter Smith

Public Attendees: Robin Mower, Nancy Lambert, Anna Boudreau, David Cedarholm, Malin Clyde, Dave Garvey, Bill Hall, Todd Selig

**1) Call the meeting to order and acknowledge absentees and those with voting authority.
Welcome to new members and introduction to the DCC – Jamie Houle**

Chair Jamie Houle called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and welcomed the new members and alternate members to the Commission. Current members introduced themselves.

2) Presentations:

a) Engaging the public with Durham's preserved lands- Malin Clyde

Malin Clyde introduced herself to the Commission members saying she is a Durham resident and a former member of the Durham Land Protection Working Group. She explained that she and Nancy Lambert, would like to begin a program of site walks and workshops to help raise awareness about the conservation lands in Durham. Ms. Clyde explained that they would like to continue to hold site walks such as the walks held at the Roselawn Farm and Merrick property, to help make the community aware of the lands, access points to these lands and to raise enthusiasm about conservation efforts in town. She said they would like to hold one walk in the summer, one in the fall, and one in the winter. Beryl Harper suggested the 100th anniversary of the Doe Farm donation to the Town of Durham be the theme for the fall 2009 walk. Malin Clyde asked members for help with marketing, making posters, spreading the word. She also asked for suggestions of names of people to contact to ask for support and assistance and also sites for future walks. Suggested locations were: Langley Lot, a nature walk on Durham Day, and Fogg Farm. Malin Clyde will finalize details and then forward a list of walks for the year to Chair Houle to have posted on the Conservation Commission page on the Town website.

b) Strafford Rivers Conservancy – Nancy Lambert and Anna Boudreau

Anna Boudreau introduced herself as the Executive Director of the Strafford Rivers Conservancy. She also introduced Nancy Lambert, who is the volunteer outreach coordinator. Ms. Boudreau explained that they are meeting with all towns in the county and explaining their function. She explained that they work with landowners to go over conservation options,

participate in site walks with other conservation organizations to help determine conservation value of property, provide conservation easement advice to communities, assist with grant writing and grant administration, coordinate projects across town borders, and offer educational programs. Ms. Boudreau noted that the Conservancy is working on a conservation plan for the region. Nancy Lambert noted that as part of the planning process for the region, the Conservancy has written a questionnaire regarding local conservation priorities. She solicited the Commission's support in answering the questions for the Town of Durham. Chair Houle accepted the questionnaire, will review it, solicit members input as needed and return it to the Conservancy.

c) Jackson Landing Boat Ramp Presentation – David Cedarholm

David Cedarholm distributed photos of the Jackson Landing ramp and the Adams Point ramp to members. He noted that the Adams Point ramp is currently the same length, slope and configuration as the Jackson Landing ramp. Mr. Cedarholm said he had spoken with Dorrie Wiggins at DES, who commented that the plan for the Jackson Landing ramp was approved by DES because it was the least disruptive to the area. Mr. Cedarholm noted that extending the ramp would require removal of vegetation on either side of the ramp. Commission members and Mr. Cedarholm discussed, in depth, the need to extend the ramp and gain valuable launching time versus disruption to the area and concerns of the DES. Mr. Cedarholm said it is his wish to see how the ramp is used for the current season and then reassess the need for a redesign and a potential resubmittal to DES.

3) Acceptance of minutes of April 9th Meeting

Corrections were made to wording, spelling and grammar on pages 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the April 9, 2009 meeting minutes.

Dwight Baldwin moved to approve the amended minutes. This was seconded by George Thomas and APPROVED unanimously.

4) New and Old Business

a) Follow-up report/discussion of DCC presentation to DPB regarding ORLI zoning – Jamie Houle

Chair Jamie Houle reported that he had attended the May meeting of the Planning Board and reread the letter from the Conservation Commission regarding the rezoning issue. He noted that it was moved to form a subcommittee to solicit professional input to investigate the issue. Jamie Houle said the motion passed and a subcommittee will be formed consisting of two town council members, two planning board members, two conservation commission members, the town engineer and a university representative. He noted that the subcommittee will also solicit input from professionals. Todd Selig noted that Robin Mower had spoken with the Strafford Rivers Conservancy to see if they had someone to suggest working with the Town on this issue and they suggested Ted Diers. Jamie Houle said the Commission needs to nominate two members for the

subcommittee. He volunteered to be one and Dwight Baldwin volunteered to be the second subcommittee member. Chair Houle will notify Jim Campbell of the Planning Board.

b) NPS Visit to Spruce Hole Bog in Durham – Peter Smith

Peter Smith explained that he and George Thomas met with a representative from the National Parks Service, Deb DiQuinzio, at the Spruce Hole Bog. He reported that the NPS had expressed an interest in bestowing an honorary plaque to the area and after the visit to the area they confirmed that they will be proceeding with this honor. Peter Smith noted that Ms. DiQuinzio was very impressed with the area and felt it highly deserving of the honor. He reported that the plaque will be made by the NPS but will need to be mounted by the Durham Public Works on an appropriate rock in the area. It was decided that the Commission would hold a site walk, inviting a representative from DPW, to choose an appropriate site for the plaque. The Commission will then formally write the NPS to request approval for the location of the plaque, and then present this to the Town Council for their approval before having Public Works move forward. The site walk was scheduled for Thursday May 28th at 8 am.

c) Revision to the Conservation landing page for the Town website item – Jamie Houle

Jamie Houle reported that Robin Mower has been working on a test site for a new landing page for the Conservation Commission on the Town website. He will forward the url address to members who can look at the site and discuss this next month.

5) Ongoing Business

a) Wetlands Applications – George Thomas

George Thomas reported that there were no new wetlands applications for review. He said that the Commission comments on the Main Street West project were sent to DES.

b) Land Protection Activities

i) Discuss conservation opportunity for the Colasante property

Todd Selig asked if the Commission thought it would make sense to pursue ownership of this parcel. Commission members felt this piece of property was indeed a priority to conserve and expressed their interest in moving forward. Jamie Houle asked if this property could be used as “in kind” exchange for the Farrell-Garvey proposal with the Trust for Public Land. Dave Garvey replied that the property could be used as in kind matching. Todd Selig noted that Greg Caporossi, from TPL will be making a presentation to the Town Council to get their feelings on that project, and that the Colasante property could tie in to that. He said there may be some source water protection grant funds available to partially fund the purchase, but that a portion may need to be funded by the Conservation Fund. The Commission said they felt this would be an appropriate use of funds if necessary. Todd Selig noted that the University would also contribute to the cost. He asked if there was sufficient interest from the members to move forward with an appraisal. The consensus was that there is sufficient interest to move forward

with an appraisal. Dave Garvey noted that an appraisal on the large parcel is well under way and that only the Colasante property would need an appraisal. He said he felt that the appraisal should be relatively simple and inexpensive (\$2000-\$2500). The consensus of the discussion was that the Conservation Commission is unanimous in their support of pursuing the Colasante properties for conservation purposes and the item will be on the June agenda for further discussion.

ii) Trust for Public Land / Farrell-Garvey proposal – discussion regarding this proposal was incorporated into the discussion on the Colasante property.

c) Town Owned Land/Conservation Easements – Beryl Harper

Beryl Harper reported that Ellen Snyder, of Ibis Wildlife Consulting, has been speaking to Jennifer Hunter and met with the subcommittee. She said the group has gone on site walks to help in making decisions with various Town owned properties. Beryl said the next site walk will be on May 27th at the Longmarsh property. The subcommittee consists of Ken Anderson, Jenna Roberts, Ann Welsh, George Thomas and Beryl Harper.

d) Mill Pond – Jamie Houle

Jamie Houle reported that he attended the Mill Pond meeting and reread for public record, the letter stating the official position of the Conservation Commission, which is to advocate for additional studies before a decision is made. He said the possibility of a feasibility study looking at Town defined issues with some funding from the Coastal Program was discussed as an option. Jamie noted that Ted Diers was supportive of an amended study if the Town provided core issues need to make a decision.

Todd Selig reported that at the May 4th Town Council meeting there seemed to be an interest in getting additional information. He said he met with Ted Diers to see what the Coastal Program could offer in financial assistance for a prefeasibility study. Mr. Selig said the Coastal Program would be willing to dedicate \$50,000 towards a preliminary investigation to help identify major threshold issues to help the community see if they are open to a full blown feasibility study. He reported the three major areas suggested by the Council to be investigated were: 1) What would the impounded area and the river look like, 2) What impacts would be realized if there were changes to the impoundment, 3) What are the real costs of removal versus repair. Mr. Selig asked for input from the Commission and if there were other areas/questions that should be addressed in the preliminary investigation.

There was discussion among the members and Mr. Selig as to who would perform the study. Mr. Selig noted that the Town would put out a Request for Proposal (RFP) once the parameters of the study were defined and chose who will perform the study. He noted that the Coastal Program would be the funding source to pay for the study, but they would not be performing the study.

Stephen Roberts expressed concern that the preliminary investigation would not be of the scope and background needed to make an informed decision. He suggested partnering with the Army Corps of Engineers.

Larry Harris added his concern that a study of sediments, storm water runoff and seasonal fluctuations and withdrawals be added to the study. Stephen Roberts suggested adding an investigation of any water flow into the pond other than from the Oyster River. Stephen Burns emphasized that the questions need to be formulated to garner as much information as possible.

Jamie Houle suggested it may be more helpful for members to review the parameters proposed for the study and then return at the next meeting with comments. Jerry Needell said the Town Council would be meeting on Monday to discuss the study and he was looking for input before that meeting.

It was decided that the members would review the core set of questions being proposed for the study and send comments to Jamie Houle by Sunday for him to forward to Jerry Needell for the Monday evening Town Council meeting.

e) Jackson's Landing – Dwight Baldwin

Dwight Baldwin reported the work continues in the area that was not finished last summer. He noted that the project has generated a New Hampshire Beautification award from the New Hampshire Arborists!

6) Board and Committee Reports

a) Town Council – Jerry Needell

Jerry Needell said there was nothing further to report.

b) Planning Board - Stephen Roberts

Stephen Roberts reported the project at 20 Strafford Avenue was originally presented with a building within the wetlands buffer, but the owner agreed to change the project to move the building out of the buffer zone.

c) Zoning Board of Adjustments

Jamie Houle noted that Robin Mower was the Conservation Commission contact with the ZBA and asked if any member would volunteer to fill this post. Ann Welsh volunteered to be the Conservation Commission contact with the ZBA and to review the ZBA information packets.

d) Lamprey River Advisory Committee - No discussion of this committee at this time.

7) Other Business - None at this time.

8) Administrative

- a) Correspondence – None at this time.
- b) Next regular meeting June 11, 2009

The next meeting of the Durham Conservation Commission was scheduled for June 11, 2009 at 7:00 pm at Town Council Chambers in Town Hall.

9) Adjournment

Beryl Harper moved to adjourn the May 14, 2009 meeting of the Durham Conservation Commission at 10:15 pm. This was seconded by Ann Welsh and APPROVED unanimously.