

Approved: February 11, 2016

Durham Conservation Commission Meeting
Thursday January 14, 2016 @ 7:00 PM

Members Present: Chair Ann Welsh, Otho Wells, Coleen Fuerst, Barbara Dill (Planning Board Representative), Robert Sullivan, Sally Tobias, Mike Morneault

Members Not Present: Dick Wollmar, Kathy Bubar

- 1) Call meeting or order. Recognize members present.

Chair Welsh called the January 14, 2016 Durham Conservation Commission meeting to order at 7:01 pm and elevated the two alternates (Mike Morneault and Sally Tobias) to voting members for the evening due to the absence of Mr. Wollmar and Ms. Bubar.

- 2) Agenda Approval

Robert Sullivan MOVED to approve the agenda as written; this was SECONDED by Barbara Dill and APPROVED unanimously.

- 3) Public Comments- there were no public comments at this meeting.

- 4) Presentations

- a. Durham Septic System Project – Kyle Pimental, Strafford Regional Planning

Mr. Pimental said that funds through the EPA for water quality planning purposes were used to study septic systems in the Sunnyside Drive, Woodridge Road and Foss Farm neighborhoods. He explained that these neighborhoods were chosen due to the age of structures, the location and potential connections. Mr. Pimental noted that many of the homes were built in early 1970s and early 1980s or earlier. He said the septic system design standards were much less strict at that time which resulted in homes being built in low lying areas and near streams. Mr. Pimental said that all three of the communities drain into water sources that eventually flow to the Oyster River and/or Lamprey River (both are impaired water bodies). He said that all three neighborhoods are within the Oyster River watershed; which was identified as having some of the highest nitrogen yields in the coastal watershed.

He explained that the overall goal for the project is to provide information to Durham on managing community septic systems. Mr. Pimental said the first part of the study was developing a data base at the parcel level. He said this included an environmental assessment and looking at permit data. Mr. Pimental said that the second part was conducting outreach and education; which will be done this year by providing materials to homeowners. He said they will also be looking for a potential site for a homeowner to install a permeable barrier. Mr. Pimental explained that the database was created using soil and environmental risk factors and infrastructure risk. He noted there is a high risk of systems failing after 40 years and in Foss Farm there are 11 systems which were constructed prior to 1975, in Woodridge Road there are 61 systems constructed prior to 1975 and in Sunnyside Drive there are 114 systems constructed prior to 1975. He said they met with public works in the fall and received

feedback on the map and they will also meet with the Town Council and provide a final report. Mr. Pimental said the outreach material will be developed and distributed and they may explore additional funding options for septic system evaluation and potential replacement. He said they will hopefully work with a landowner that agrees to a permeable reactive barrier being installed on their property (similar to the one on Griffin Drive). Mr. Pimental noted that the Rockingham County Commission will have some data from similar systems they have installed available in the spring.

Barbara Dill asked if the Permeable Replacement Barrier (PRB) system could work as a life extender for old septic systems.

Mr. Pimental agreed the PRB could extend the life of a system and would provide some flexibility to the property owner. He said they do not know how long the barriers will last because it is new technology.

Sally Tobias asked if they are installing a PRB as a test subject or to encourage others to use the technology.

Mr. Pimental said they will be using the site to see how the systems work. He said that up to this date it has been shown to work to reduce nitrogen numbers.

Otho Well asked if the PRB systems work if they would be installed in addition to a septic system.

Mr. Pimental agreed that the PRB systems would be installed in addition to a septic system. He said they are also looking for support from the Conservation Commission when they approach a landowner about the PRB system.

Chair Welsh said the members reviewed the project on Griffin Drive and thought the technology looked promising. She said they would support another project like that.

Coleen Fuerst recommended gathering before and after data from the property where the PRB system is installed. She asked Mr. Pimental to share the study electronically with the members.

Chair Welsh noted that since the Commission has discussed doing outreach work on septic systems they support this project.

b. Lamprey River Trail – Kyle Pimental

Mr. Pimental said the Lamprey River Symposium was last week and he compiled a poster of the Lamprey River Trail project for that Symposium. He said they were contacted by the Recreation Working Group of the Lamprey River Advisory Group to work on the project. Mr. Pimental said they had received a National Park Service grant (\$6000) for a walking trail from Epping to Newmarket and they asked us to provide maps along the river to bring to the communities involved. He said the maps include Conservation land, wetlands, and flood plains. Mr. Pimental explained that the maps were needed in order to draw a route with the least disturbance and to avoid as much private property as possible. He said support was gathered from the communities and a proposed path and a secondary path was proposed. The communities involved include: Epping, Lee, Madbury, Durham and Newmarket.

Chair Welsh said a meeting was held in Durham and the community was invited. She said they are hoping that each community will take responsibility for the portion of the trail that occurs in their community and discuss it with the community and with property owners along the path.

Mr. Sullivan suggested that getting a mile or so of the path accomplished might help bring momentum to the project. He suggested starting with a location near the river (Wiswall). Mr. Sullivan asked if there is funding for someone to contact property owners.

Mr. Pimental said there is funding to provide maps for that area and gather information about the property owners to enable someone from Durham to reach out to the property owners. He explained that their contract was strictly for providing materials to move the project forward. Mr. Pimental said if there is an area where Durham thinks connections can be made they can provide maps and materials for that area to help move things forward. He also noted that if there is interest they may be able to apply for funding to take the project to the next step.

Mr. Sullivan suggested that the area from the Doe Farm to Wiswall would be a good starting point.

c. Review of swale at Wagon Hill Farm – Dennis Meadows

Mr. Meadows said he is a representative of the Steering Committee for the Wagon Hill Community Gardens. He said they meet once a month to deal with and manage affairs of the garden. Mr. Meadows said he came before the Commission seven years ago when the gardens were just beginning. He noted that the initial plan for Wagon Hill suggested a certain amount of land be set aside for gardening; but this was not done until 2009 when the group created nine gardens. Mr. Meadows said that water is a key issue with gardens and in working with Mr. Lynch a pump and watering system was installed, but now there is an issue in the spring after heavy rains where there can be a few inches of standing water in the gardens and under the barn. He said an engineering study was done that proposed a parking lot and shallow drainage swales (8=10" deep). Mr. Meadows said they would like to implement the swales; which would require one day of work with town equipment and town personnel. He said the map shows the gardens and where the swales would be located. Mr. Meadows said the Agricultural Commission voted in favor, the Stewardship Committee did not have objections and he would like to know if this Commission has any concerns. He said he will also speak with the Parks and Recreation Committee.

Mr. Sullivan MOVED to have the Conservation Commission support the installation of drainage swales at the Wagon Hill Farm gardens; this was SECONDED by Sally Tobias and APPROVED unanimously.

5) Minutes

Otho Wells MOVED to approve the December 2015 minutes as written; this was SECONDED by Sally Tobias and APPROVED unanimously.

6) Old Business

a) Goss property request for funds – Martha Twombly – Forest Society

Chair Welsh said the Forest Society and Mr. Goss provided a presentation on the Goss property conservation previously. She said they are here before us with a formal request for funds.

Martha Twombly displayed a map showing the property currently owned by the Goss family and noted that the proposal is for the Forest Society to buy the property outlined in red to become a reservation to be open to the public in the seacoast to provide access to trails and outdoor activity. She said they will also be purchasing and agricultural easement on agricultural fields and have one of the families retain the homestead and the agricultural fields and continue to practice agriculture on the fields. Ms. Twombly also displayed a map which showed trails currently on the property. She explained that one of the primary conservation values of the property is the frontage along the Oyster River which has rare and endangered species located on it. She said the property is close to or abutting other conservation land/town owned/school owned land and provides a lot of potential connections. Ms. Twombly said the Forest Society is asking for contributions from each of the towns that have conservation funds for the project. She said they consider this a high quality project and are asking for \$150,000 and for the Town to hold a conservation easement for the property in their community. She said the easements will provide each town stewardship of that property and involvement in the property. Ms. Twombly said that if the project is successful the town of Madbury will donate a conservation easement to the Forest Society on a piece of property they own adjacent to this project. She said they need to raise 2.25 million to cover the cost to purchase, transaction costs and stewardship endowment to maintain land into the future. She said they have funding from LCHP flood mitigation funds and are applying for an agricultural easement. Ms. Twombly said they are asking for the support of the Durham Conservation Commission to provide a recommendation for a contribution and asking the Commission to accept a conservation easement for the portion of land in the town of Durham.

Chair Welsh said there may be a small amount of funds available from the water fund set aside for the Spruce Hole Well.

Mike Lynch said there is a minimal amount of funding left in that fund.

Ms. Twombly said they are attempting to build momentum for the project; noting that the Towns of Lee and Madbury need to submit a warrant article for their town meetings.

Otho Wells asked if the Town of Durham accepts the easement if the Forest Society will impose any other restrictions.

Ms. Twombly said they would work with the town on language for the easement.

Coleen Fuerst asked what uses are being proposed for the property.

Ms. Twombly said they are proposing the same as existing uses; no motorized vehicles other than during trail maintenance; restore wetlands, allow passive recreation, allow existing snowmobile trail and horseback riding.

Mr. Sullivan asked if there is a date for when the funds are needed.

Ms. Twombly said there is no date for when the funds are needed; however the support of the Town is encouraging to the public at large. She explained that they will need to raise one million from individual contributions. She said the closing date is scheduled for December 15th so the fundraising deadline needs to be before that (October). Ms. Twombly said the development potential is very high on this property; and if this project is not successful the land will most likely be sold for that purpose.

Chair Welsh said the property in Durham is relatively small; but the benefit is the large amount of property along the Oyster River. She said there is approximately \$128,000 in the Conservation Fund.

Robert Sullivan MOVED to support the Forest Society's Goss Project with funds available (currently approximately \$120,000) in the Conservation Fund; this was SECONDED by Coleen Fuerst and APPROVED unanimously.

Robert Sullivan MOVED to accept and hold a conservation easement on the portion of land located in Durham if the project moves forward; this was SECONDED by Otho Wells and APPROVED unanimously.

b) Property Notebooks – Mike Lynch, public works

Mr. Lynch displayed the notebooks and a listing of Durham properties. He said they have completed five more property inventory notebooks and it is time for the Conservation Commission to approve a few more to continue with the work. He said that Ellen Snyder puts the books together with the information regarding the lands (property inventory).

Chair Welsh said that some of the properties have management plans. She said the Commission originally funded the project for \$8000 and today there is a balance of \$1541. Chair Welsh said the balance would provide enough finding for four or five more properties. She recommended continuing with lands on the list.

Mr. Lynch suggested continuing with the Wiswall Dam area, the Bennett Road (Lord property), the Depot Road area and the Town Pound. He asked for an additional \$2000 for the fund to be used for this purpose only.

Otho Wells MOVED to allocate \$2000 for Durham Property inventory notebooks; this was SECONDED by Robert Sullivan and APPROVED unanimously.

c) New Business – there was no New Business discussed at this meeting.

d) Ongoing Business/Tasks/Working Groups

a. Land Protection – Thompson property.

Chair Welsh reported that this project is ongoing and the appraisal is being worked on.

b. Land Stewardship – Oyster River Forest

Chair Welsh said the Committee met today and formed a small subcommittee to work on funding for trails. She said they will need a new Chair of the Land Stewardship Committee and encouraged members to think about joining the Committee. She said the next meeting will be February 11th. She said that she will also be stepping down from the Conservation Commission in March so the Commission will need to appoint a new representative to the Land Stewardship Committee.

c. Permits – Edgewood Road – changes

Chair Welsh said there have been changes submitted to the Edgewood Road permit previously reviewed by the Commission. She explained that the changes are an increase of road coverage (slightly more into the wetlands).

e) Board and Council Reports

- a. Town Council – There was no Town Council report.
- b. Planning Board – Barbara Dill reported that the Site Plan Regulations were approved and that the Perley Lane application was postponed.
- c. ZBA – Sally Tobias said she viewed the Zoning Board meeting where there were three variances requested for non-conforming properties.
 - 1) a property on Cedar Point Road made a request to install a second floor. Rain water runoff was addressed by the proposed installation of a rain garden. This was approved by the Zoning Board,
 - 2) a property on Foss Farm Road requested approval for a four bedroom house in an attempt to make the property more attractive to sell. The Zoning Board was concerned with the size of the house and the lack of plans – this application was denied;
 - 3) Harmony Homes requested a stable and paddock; this was approved with the condition that the paddock be pulled back out of the 100 foot setback and that manure will be kept in a concrete non permeating, non-leaching container/area.

f) Administrative

Robert Sullivan asked if Chair Welsh's last meeting will be February or March.

Chair Welsh said she would need to check on when her appointment ends.

Mr. Sullivan asked the members to contemplate who wants to be the next Chair.

g) Other Business/Announcements/Reminders – there was no “other business” discussed at this meeting.

h) Adjourn

Otho Wells MOVED to adjourn the January 14, 2016 meeting of the Durham Conservation Commission at 9:10 pm; this was SECONDED by Coleen Fuerst and APPROVED unanimously.

The next regular meeting of the Durham Conservation Commission will be on February 11, 2016.

Respectfully submitted by,

Sue Lucius, Secretary to the Durham Conservation Commission