



City of Rochester Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes

Wednesday September 27, 2023

Rochester Police Department (2nd Floor)
23 Wakefield Street, Rochester, NH

(These minutes were approved on October 25, 2023)

Attendance

Presence	Commission Member	Notes	Members of the Public
Present	Mike Dionne, <i>Chair</i>	excused	Mike Garrepy Tuck Realty Corporation
Present	Kevin Sullivan, <i>Vice Chair</i>		Darren Scopel Teacher at Spaulding HS
Present	Mark Jennings		Sue Bickford
Present	Merry Lineweber		Jeremy Lougee SELT
Absent	Dan Nickerson		
Present	Dylan Dowe		
Present	Renée McIsaac, <i>Planner I</i>		

1) Call to Order:

Mike Dionne called the meeting to order at 6:34pm.

Chair made a motion to move meeting minute review to follow the Conservation Overlay District proposal review. There were no objections.

2) Conservation Overlay District:

Autumn Street Conservation Subdivision; Tax Map 104 Lot 10

A brief overview of the project was presented by Mike Garrepy of Tuck Realty Corporation. He explained that the project had gone to Planning Board and was continued to the October 2, 2023 meeting to allow for additional reviews. It was at this time that Shanna Saunders noted the previous conditional use application reviewed by the Conservation Commission did not include the wetland buffer impacts. Mike Garrepy identified the areas associated with these impacts on the plan sheet.

Kevin Sullivan made a motion to approve of the conditional use application for the proposed wetland buffer impacts. Merry Lineweber seconded the motion.

The motion passed with Kevin Sullivan, Merry Lineweber, Dylan Dowe and Mike Dionne voting in favor, and Mark Jennings voting against.

3) Notice of Intent to Cut Wood or Timber:

Intent to Cut: 71 Lowell Street - Tax Map 132 Lot 13; 23-389-02-T

Renée McIsaac reported that Dan Nickerson had reviewed the intent and did not have any concerns.

4) Approval of Minutes:

Review Meeting Minutes of August 23, 2023.

Mark Jennings made a motion to accept the meeting minutes. Mike Dionne seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously.

5) New Business:

a. Spaulding High School Student Project

Darren Scopel, a Spaulding High School teacher, introduced a school project that he is coordinating with Sue Bickford, a GIS and drone specialist. They have identified the Heath Bog as the study site for this project. Students are learning about GIS, Survey123 and using drones for data collection. For the upcoming project they will program a mission for a drone, create a photo mosaic of the site, generate maps, collect data on species distribution, and record water chemistry measurements. They are seeking any feedback that the Commission may have regarding the proposal.

Renée McIsaac referenced a study that was conducted in 1994 by UNH students looking to see if Heath Bog fit the definition to be considered a prime wetland. The paper concluded that it did not quite meet the definition of a prime wetland but the City could assign greater value to the site and designate it a prime wetland.

Sue Bickford stated there are some important plant species known to occur in Heath Bog and mentioned Leatherleaf, bullrush and cranberries. She noted it was historically one of the most acidic bogs in the state and was interested to see if it has changed.

Mike Dionne pointed out that Heath Brook serves as the head waters for Willow Brook and Willow Brook is known to contain wild Brook trout, a species of special concern. He indicated that with increased land development pressures and the sensitive nature of a bog, that collecting new data on the condition of the bog would be valuable.

The Commission members indicated that they supported the proposed effort and were interested in seeing the results of the study.

b. SELT Update on Conservation Proposal

Jeremy Lougee provided an update on the conservation easement appraisal for the 39 Bernard Road property. While the report is still being finalized, the value of the easement had been calculated. The value had been shared with the property owners and Jeremy was meeting with them to review the records.

Jeremy will follow up with Renée McIsaac before the end of the week to determine next steps.

c. NHDES Letter of Deficiency – American Used Parts, 40 Little Falls Bridge Rd – Tax Map 209 Lot 10

The Conservation Commission discussed concerns regarding an operation of a motor vehicle junk yard that was not complying with best management practices. Members felt that there should be more oversight and routine inspections of noncompliant sites.

Renée McIsaac stated that she is reviewing the rules regulating these facilities and would follow up with the Commission.

d. Milkweed Pods

Mark Jennings presented milkweed pods collected from his property and demonstrated how to remove the seeds from a closed pod.

e. ZBA Application for 17 Farmington Road - Tax Map 221 Lot 164

Renée McIsaac stated that the applicant is seeking several variances from the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) and there are two requests that are for wetland buffer impacts. She explained that the ZBA could approve the variance requests without Conservation Commission review and if they wanted to provide comment, the case is scheduled to be heard on October 11, 2023.

Kevin Sullivan wanted to know what necessitated paving of the access between the parcels.

Mike Dionne commented that the permitting and rules for wetland crossings using OHRV's [Off-Highway Recreational Vehicles] are different from those for street vehicles. He questioned what was planned for the existing wetland crossing.

Kevin Sullivan agreed to attend the upcoming ZBA meeting to ask additional questions and provide comment.

f. Draft Conservation Commission Meeting Calendar for 2024

The Commission did not have any concerns with the proposed schedule for 2024.

g. Trial LACE Exercise – discussion tabled to next meeting.

h. Potential New England Mountain Bike Association Collaboration

Renée McIsaac explained that she met with representatives of the Seacoast Chapter of the New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA), and they are interested in expanding trail access in Rochester. The group expressed interest in maintaining trails and have experience working with landowners in other communities. They are a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit and have insurance coverage. She wanted to know if the Commission would agree to the exploration of the Route 11 conservation easement site for trail creation and if they had other suggestions.

The possibility of partnering on trail expansion with the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests at the Champlin Forest, and potential use of the Henderson property were briefly discussed.

The Commission expressed interest in meeting with NEMBA representatives to ensure appropriate practices are employed. They agreed the Route 11 site could be suitable for this purpose. The relationship could further be evaluated based on how things progress with this site.

Renée McIsaac stated she will connect with the NEMBA representatives and report back to the Commission.

i. Open Comment Period for the State's EV Charging Grant Program

The NHDES's application to the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure discretionary Charging and Fueling Infrastructure program was discussed. The Commission did not have any comments to submit at this time.

6) Reports: discussion tabled to next meeting

7) Old Business:

- a. Still need to schedule site walk at Hope Farm.
Renée McIsaac will reach out to Joey Sanborn about scheduling a visit.
- b. Cocheco River Clean-up (potential for working with Trout Unlimited)
Scheduled time to review access to the Cocheco River for a future clean-up effort.

8) Adjournment.

A motion was made by Dylan Dowe and seconded by Merry Lineweber to adjourn at 8:48pm; the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Renée McIsaac
Planner I