

Northfield Conservation Commission Minutes 3/15/10

Monthly Public Meeting – Wednesday, March 15th, 2010 at 7:30pm.

The Northfield Conservation Commission met at the Northfield Town Hall, Room 5b, 69 Main St, Northfield, MA

Present: William Llewelyn, Chairman
Joan Deely
Mike Barry
Charles Blanker

Absent: David Thomas

Staff: Sarah Goodwin, Administrative Assistant

Guests: David Graham, Mount Grace
Jay Rasku, Mount Grace
Norm Edgurt, Mount Grace
Sam Richardson, Northfield Resident
Barbara Richardson, Northfield Resident
Tracy Rogers, Town Administrative Assistant
Karen O'Neil, PVRs Envirothon
Isabel Hussey, PVRs Envirothon
Chelsea Jones, PVRs Envirothon
Penny Betsold, PVRs Envirothon Advisor

7:36 Meeting called to Order by W. Llewelyn

7:36 Guests

PVRs Envirothon Team – Students from the High School are to attend a competition the second week in May and approached the conservation about town water management topics they would be addressing at the competition. They asked a series of questions, such as what is the purpose of the Conservation Commission; what the Commission is doing to protect the ground water in Northfield (C. Blanker answered: we do so by upholding the regulations set by the state to regulate any land use in areas around the wetlands, the Town of Northfield has no local bylaws in regard to this so the only laws that are protecting ground water in Northfield are state regulations), drinking water withdrawals effected by consumption and quality, (J. Deely addressed this question by pointing out the different watersheds and advised contacting Steve Malsh of the water district, the CONSCOM only gets into ground water protection through wetland regulation), what is most critical to groundwater protection in Northfield (C. Blanker responded that it would most likely be residents who violate wetland protection act, either on purpose or through accident, and it may be prevented by getting the word out more about wetland regulations), any wetlands in Northfield that you are most concerned about (C. Blanker stated that Four Mile Brook Rd, with its banks so close to the river and its flooding being an ongoing issue, and J. Deely mentioned CT River bank erosion as well), is Giardia present in the water (C. Blanker referred the students to the Board of the Health for more information on that and J. Deely mentioned its mostly located around beaver populated areas which are more likely to be found around agricultural areas), groundwater and drinking water concerns were referred to the Board of Health, and the final question addressed any concerns that have been raised about the Tritium leak from VT Yankee effecting resident's groundwater (C. Blanker responded that there were absolutely none that have come before the Board at this time).

Tracy Rogers, Notice of Intent procedures – Highway wished Tracy to place a public notice for an upcoming project of cleaning ditches and replacing pipes. Unfortunately the notice went in the paper too late, but the Commission reviewed the material and gave feedback anyway and a formal Hearing will be held next meeting. C. Blanker stated that the culvert replacement on Captain Beer's Plain Rd will require a Notice of Intent but the ditch cleaning may not and it was recommended she check with Mark Stinson. Tracy said she will submit the forms online which may speed up the process

Mt. Grace Land Trust – Jay Rasku introduced a number of guests affiliated with the project to talk about tonight and passed out documents for the Commission to reference. He addressed the board about the Metacomet

Monadanok Forest Legacy Project, which included nine land owners and comprised 950 acres. The Grant was awarded (1.4 million dollars, over 400 thousand dollars for Northfield) from the U.S. Forest Service. The two properties that were discussed were the Richardson property (39 acres) and the Fowler property (27 acres) and the Brush II property (123 acres). Fowler and Brush II would best be held by the Town of Northfield for recreation and conservation (article 95 status). The Richardson property will continue to be held by the current property owners but under a conservation restriction and the right of the land owner to develop will be extinguished. All three properties will be under Jenny Tuff's direction, of the Greater Northfield Watershed Association, who has stepped forward to monitor the conservation of these lands. The Town of Northfield will not have to pay anything in order to accept and act upon this grant. There will be a baseline established in order to ensure the guidelines of the grant were being followed. The Grant does not require that the lumbering income from the forest on the land is to be used only for the property, in fact it can be used by the town as needed. This may help to alleviate the loss of taxes from the property being altered in status. Jay gave examples of town forest that have been logged in nearby towns in order to show that the possibility of logging this new town forest could potentially increase income to the town. In order for this project to move forward they would need a letter of support, votes to approve from both the Conservation Commission and the Selectboard and then placing it on the Town warrant next week in order to appear at Town Meeting and get a majority of two thirds vote by the town to accept these lots as town properties. W. Llewelyn inquired as to what the assessment of logging potential was on these properties and Jay presented an assessment already completed. A Forest Stewardship Plan, which is required by the Forest Legacy Project for all properties would need to be completed every ten years and that may need to be funded by the town. David Graham spoke up saying that the state is currently paying for all Forest Stewardship Plans and renewals are much less expensive and often fall under grants offered through many different sources. Llewelyn inquired about the Commission's opportunity to change its mind as to whether to log the property or not. Sam spoke up to say that regardless if the Forest Legacy Program, two of the properties were going into Chapt. 61 which would cut out about 75% of the tax income to the town.... so turning these properties over to the Forest Legacy Program with its potential for logging would actually increase the potential income for the town. J. Deely asked about the features in these properties that would be appealing for recreation and David Graham described a couple of key points that would be appealing to hikers, including a cave, vernal pools, and old growth stands. There are currently some ATV and snowmobile use right now and these trails would need to be assessed. Sam wanted to add a final point about Brush II that an added conditions might include clearing land for a view for recreational purposes and David Graham agreed, saying it could be included in the Forest Management Plan. J. Deely suggested the possibility of using the vernal pools, getting them certified, as a training resource for students.

8:19 Motion: C. Blanker made a motion to accept this proposal for all three parcels. J. Deely seconded the motion. All in favor, unanimously approved. Motion carried.

W. Llewelyn will sign a letter of support, which will be composed by Jay Rasku, and got assurance that Jay Rasku will be present at the Town Meeting in order to explain this proposal and answer questions. Sam offered an invitation to all present to come and visit his property which has public access and check out the great views that have been cleared. There is a blue blazed loop trail which can be found at the end of Alexander Hill Rd and easily hiked. The white blazed trail along side it is the old M&M trail, now the NEMS Trail. David Graham concluded that the project is currently working with NMH and will be coming before the Commission again in the near future with more properties to review. Meeting minutes to be emailed to Jay Rasku.

8:32 Citizen Concerns

East St Resident – The resident who came before the Commission last meeting would like the members to compose and send a letter to the ZBA in concern of the Businesses operating on East St.

8:44 Motion: J. Deely made a motion to send the ZBA a letter of concern in regard to the potential negative impact on the wetland. C. Blanker seconded. All in favor, unanimously approved. Motion passed. Assistant to write the letter and submit it to the ZBA.

8:40 Site Visits

South Mountain Rd Site Visit – J. Deely made an informal site visit to the potential development property of M. Barry to determine the need for a Determination. C. Blanker also took a drive up there, but both concurred that there was too much snow at the time and they would need to conduct another visit in order to properly advise. Mt. Hermon Rd, Jim Borke – site visit request made to W. Llewelyn in order to determine if there's a build-able lot on it due to the wetlands proximity. C. Blanker to contact him and stop by, if there's any issue he'll be sure to contact the rest of the Commission to site visit.

8:45 Reading and Approval of Previous Minutes

Board Members signed January 20th, 2009 Meeting Minutes. To be turned into Town Secretary for archiving.
Meeting Minutes from February 10th reviewed and corrected.

8:42 Motion by C. Blanker approved minutes presented with amendments. J. Deely 2nd, all in favor. Motion passed.

8:47 Budget 11324.96

Administrative Assistant Hours – 7 hrs. approved and signed by the Commission

8:49 New Business

Forest Cutting Plans – Winchester Rd

8:50 Mail

Town Memos – ZBA Memo & Warwick Memo

The Beacon

Copy of Four Mile Brook Rd Grant letter

8:56 Adjournment W. Llewelyn moved to adjourn, J. Deely 2nd by golly. Meeting adjourned.