

Hopkinton Conservation Commission
January 20, 2015 Meeting
Held at Town Hall - 7:00PM

APPROVED Minutes

Present: Lee Wilder, Ron Klemarczyk, Erick Leadbeater, Cleve Kapala, Jed Merrow, and Doug Giles.

Guests: Hilary Chapman and Phil Brown, Audubon Society

Meeting was called to order at 7:08 by Chairperson Lee Wilder.

Agenda:

1. Discussions with Audubon. Hilary Chapman and Phil Brown of the Audubon Society led the discussion of the beaver trapping and communication challenges associated with an incident at the Brockway Preserve in November. It was identified that the Society had a youth program scheduled for November 11 and that it was learned that beaver traps had been set constituting a danger to youth programs. Lee acknowledged that communication on the issue had been imperfect but pointed out that the beavers had impacted a state-listed dam owned by the Town. The Town is responsible to keep listed dams safe. The Town road agent was also concerned with the rising water level and the adjacent Farrington Corner Road. In addition, as the Brockway being an LCIP purchased lot, LCIP asked that we address the beaver activity. The Town road agent addressed the beaver issue and associated road and flooding issues. A discussion ensued relative to the need for improved communication between the HCC and Audubon relative to the Brockway Preserve, its educational mission and shared responsibilities. Two way communication in a "timely manner" was stressed and agreed as essential. Coordination and communication with the Town of Hopkinton by Audubon should be routed through the HCC chairperson. Hilary agreed to re-visit the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Town and Audubon and re-submit suggested clarifications and modifications to Lee for consideration by HCC in an effort to insure improved and complete communication. It was agreed that the January discussion constituted the annual meeting between the two organizations to assess and clarify communication and responsibility. A subsequent discussion ensued relative to a timber harvest encroachment between the Beyer Lot and the Smith Pond Bog Lot that had previously been discussed by Ron Klemarczyk and Phil Brown and resolved to their mutual satisfaction. Ron agreed to make an effort to examine the survey status of the Beyer Lot and potentially try to re-visit and re-mark boundaries of the Beyer Lot prior to Town Meeting in March.
2. Approval of HCC Minutes of 12/16/14. Minutes from the December 16 meeting were approved with edits.
3. Treasurer's Report. The Treasurer's report through year-end of 2014 was approved and a motion passed to forward the report to the Town was accepted. Jed was commended and thanked for his focus on timely and complete financial reporting by HCC.
4. Emerald Ash Borer Up-date. No information has been received from the Merrimack County Extension Service or the NH Division of Forests and Lands relative to a presentation, display or kiosk at Town Meeting in March.

5. J. C. Brockway Nature Preserve water level update. Doug reported that the water level issues have been addressed.
6. Trails Committee Report. No new issues were noted, although continued public use of the Greenway trail is in evidence.
7. “Wash-outs” Old Stagecoach Road. No action on this issue was reported in follow-up to Rob Knight’s notification to the Town of this problem.
8. SPNHF re Murphy / Rose and Janeway #1 monitoring. A discussion ensued relative to whether the HCC could or should accept monitoring responsibilities on the two easements. The presence or absence of stewardship fund was discussed and there was uncertainty at the meeting of the Grantee status of the easements. [Subsequent to the January meeting Ron has reported that the Town is Grantee of the easements and therefore is legally responsible for annual monitoring.]
9. Need for a Conservation Easement Steward. A discussion followed in connection with the SPNHF request relative to monitoring responsibilities for conservation easements. The conversation focused on the costs and legal nature of the responsibilities associated with insuring that easements are enforced and their terms are monitored. It was pointed out that the current practice is that when a Grantor grants an easement the practice is to require that the Grantor fund and the Grantee has an appropriate stewardship fee embedded in the transaction to guarantee that the terms and conditions of the easement will be understood, and periodically monitored and enforced as may be needed by circumstance.
10. HCC Report for 2014 Town Report. It was noted that Ron had drafted and circulated a HCC submittal for the town report and incorporated edits suggested. He was thanked for that effort.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Continuing and routine stewardship and maintenance for town conservation properties, trails, infrastructure, PR, etc. A discussion ensued and it was recognized that town conservation properties and trails are enjoying increased recognition and public use, but that such usage and recognition necessitates the need for money to appropriately maintain and steward the lands, address the needs for people to monitor and maintain the trails for safe usage, and update public information and mapping and communication issues. It was recognized that the 250 year celebration of the Town will be enhanced with broader information from HCC about trail and property issues and work is in progress to insure that the HCC role is appropriately reflected in the upcoming celebration and events.
A specific discussion occurred with respect to updating the HCC website(which will be done by Kathy Barnes as a volunteer in coordination with HCC) and separately the authorization of an expense of up to \$300 to revise the GIS mapping on the website to reflect the Dustin conservation easement, Amesbury field and the farm road trail that connects the easement with Bohannon Farm. Kathy’s contribution was noted with appreciation.
2. Eric volunteered to begin working with Hopkinton Schools regarding HCC sending a student to a Summer Conservation Camp in 2015.

Meeting adjourned at 8:46 PM.

Minutes submitted by Cleve Kapala, Interim Secretary

Next HCC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday February 17 at 7 PM at Town Hall. Jed is host.