

Hopkinton Conservation Commission
September 19, 2023 Meeting
Held at the Hopkinton Town Hall

9/19/2023 Minutes – Approved 10/10/23

Present: James Newsom, Ron Klemarczyk, Rob Knight, Bonnie Christie, Alternates: Molly Hardenbergh, Katherine Mitchell, Stephanie Kratsios
Absent: Melissa Jones, Bob LaPree, Jonathan Bradstreet

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by James Newsom.

1. HCC public and non-public minutes for May 16, 2023, June 20, 2023, and August 15, 2023 were accepted as presented.
2. HCC mail: No mail was received.
3. Treasurer's report: The Chair reported that at the end of August the balance in the Conservation account was \$148,642.99 and the Town Forest account was \$26,660.39. The only activity in August was interest accrual.
4. Budget request for Town Meeting: James Newsom's opinion is that due to the large amount of money the HCC has on hand, it is unlikely that the Select Board would support an increase in our \$1.00 budget this year. Discussed how we could work toward having a realistic budget from the town. Stephanie Kratsios made a motion to request a \$2.00 budget. The motion was seconded by Ron Klemarczyk and passed with Rob Knight voting no.
5. Tyler Landing update: Ron Klemarczyk reported that work on the driveway and parking area has not been possible due to rain, but everyone is ready to start as soon as the property dries out enough.
6. Pollinator Garden at Tyler Landing: The garden would be a resource to educate the public and seminars could be held there. Stephanie Kratsios proposed setting aside enough money to do the garden right from the beginning, including hiring a professional to design and install it, which would reduce the need for ongoing maintenance. Discussed locating the garden so it would not further reduce the size of the hayfield and concluded that where the refugee gardens are presently located would be ideal. Ron Klemarczyk said the refugee gardens had not been used again this year. Stephanie Kratsios asked for HCC support to further investigate a pollinator garden with professionals, and the commission was supportive of proceeding.
7. Trails update - Kearsarge Rail Connector: Ron Klemarczyk reported that a driveway permit has been issued, but he is still waiting for a wetlands permit from DES.
8. Natural Resource Inventory: Bonnie Christie reported that the report is zooming toward its conclusion. Katherine Mitchell has edited the entire report. Bonnie is working on the recommendations section.
Discussed how to classify the Army Corps of Engineers flood control land, since it is not really conservation land and distorts the amount of conservation land in Hopkinton. Agreed it should be shown separately from regular conservation land.
Discussed having the NRI for the Planning Board before their 10/17 meeting when they are scheduled to receive the Economic Development Committee presentation. The target is to finish the draft by 9/29 or 9/30 and circulate it to the HCC for review prior to meeting.

- Agreed to move the next HCC meeting to 10/10 so the NRI can be approved at that meeting and sent to the Planning Board prior to their 10/17 meeting.
9. Five Rivers' conservation planning: Rob Knight reported that the plan is finished and should be a very helpful tool for the towns as well as Five Rivers. Discussed having Five Rivers make a presentation on the plan.
 10. Wetland Training: Bonnie Christie attended the training over two weekends at UNH. It included both classroom and field training and was very technical. Bonnie's conclusion is that wetlands is a very complex subject, but she learned a lot.
 11. Invasives at Riverside Park: Bonnie Christie reported that there is an infestation of bittersweet and poison ivy and would like to investigate having a professional from the Merrimack River Watershed Council come in and do a workshop on invasive control.
 12. Update on river friendly business: Bonnie Christie reported that DES is interested.
 13. Commenting on wetland permits: Discussed how the HCC could better provide input to DES on wetland permits when there is only a 15-day window for official comment and the HCC meets monthly. The conservation commission is the only local municipal body that comments on wetland applications before DES and DES takes conservation commission input quite seriously. If the HCC provides notice within the 15-day window of its intent to comment, then there is an additional 40 days to actually submit the comments. The HCC could provide notice of intent for all wetlands applications, giving us time to decide if we want to actually comment. However, this would slow down simple applications like driveway crossings and might create bad feelings. Stephanie Kratsios made a motion that the HCC setup a three-person wetland permit subcommittee to review wetland applications and decide whether to intervene. The subcommittee would develop criteria for making that decision. Molly Hardenbergh seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Bonnie Christie and Katherine Mitchell volunteered to serve on the committee, and James Newsom will reach out to HCC members not at the meeting to determine interest in being on the subcommittee.
 14. HCC meetings on Zoom: Zoom access would be helpful for members who cannot attend meetings in person. James Newsom will investigate the current rules for holding meetings with Zoom access.

Stephanie Kratsios made a motion, seconded by Ron Klemarczyk to adjourn to non-public meeting per RSA 91 A:3 II (d) Acquisition of real estate and (c) Potential to harm the reputation of a person. Vote unanimous in favor. The Committee adjourned to non-public session at 8:20 PM. The Committee returned from non-public session at 8:55 PM. Stephanie Kratsios made a motion, seconded by Ron Klemarczyk to seal the minutes until the project is able to go public or removed from consideration or there is no longer potential to harm a reputation. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM. Next HCC meeting is scheduled for 7:00 on October 10, 2023 at the Town Hall.

Minutes submitted by Rob Knight.