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North Hampton Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes – April 11, 2023

Administrative: The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. via Channel 22 from the Town Hall. The agenda was posted in Compliance with RSA 91-requirements.

Roll Call: Members present: Lisa Wilson, (Chair), Lauri Etela, Audrey Prior, Phil Thayer and Andrew Vorkink. **Members of the public:** Residents Donna McCay and Ann Yenchick.

Approval of February 14, 2023 Draft Minutes: After review of the February 14, 2023 minutes, *a motion was made by Audrey Prior, duly seconded by Lauri Etela.* The motion carried.

New Business:

Community Service – Conservation Land: Donna McCay, a Deer Run Road resident discussed with the Commission how best to organize a clean-up of a segment of the Dustin-Booker Farm trail off Red Fox Road. She is seeking volunteers from the Commission, Deer Run Road, and Buckskin Lane residents to assist by the end of April if possible. Donna suggested specific work that needs to be done including debris from tree limbs that should be cleared. Phil Thayer volunteered to remove fallen trees with a chain saw and suggested others could do raking and brush clearing. Kate Dardinski has also walked the trail and identified areas where work needs to be done as well as locations for potential bog bridges. Donna McCay will plan to post notes at residents' homes to seek volunteers from the neighborhood to help clear the trail.

NH DES Expedited Minimum Impact (EXP) Wetlands Permit Application: The commission discussed the application for the construction of a residential driveway culvert replacement for Joseph Falzone, 77 Post Road, North Hampton, NH Tax Map 8, Lots 100 and 101 prepared by CSA Env. Consultants, LLC, 36 Stage Road, Nottingham, NH 03290. The Planning Board has approved the application and upon review by the New Hampshire Heritage Bureau, Fish and Game recommended that the culvert be replaced with corrugated metal or reinforced concrete pipe to provide better traction for wildlife rather than the proposed high density polyethylene pipe (HDPE). *A motion was made by Phil Thayer, duly seconded by Lauri Etela, to authorize the Chairman to sign the wetlands permit application.* The motion carried.

Nomination for Appointments to the Conservation Commission: *A motion was made by Andrew Vorkink, duly seconded by Audrey Prior, to recommend to the Select Board the appointments of Alyson Ryder as an alternate member and Lauri Etela and Lisa Wilson as regular members, each for three-year terms.* The motion carried.

Old Business:

Conservation Easement Subcommittee Update: Andrew Vorkink reported two issues concerning conservation parcels. The first issue concerns the existing location of the Forest Hills Farm purple trail and explained why it will have to be re-located. Andy explained that the purple trail was originally a ski trail when Sagamore Golf Club had cross country skiing north of the golf course in the woods. Skiing ended when the town bought the land in the area in 2007.

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At that time there was no housing development on the Greenland side of the border and the trail ran into the Greenland woods, then under the east-west power lines and then back into North Hampton under the north-south power lines. When the Greenland development was built about ten years ago people from Greenland resurrected the purple trail as an easy way to get to the North Hampton trails. Given that no one around Balsam Circle objected, the Commission then put the trail back on our maps. Since, however, Mr. Dossett has had issues with hikers recently, the Commission will now need to close the trail and move it away from Mr. Dossett's land and put it wholly within the Town conservation area. Lisa Wilson spoke to the owner to let him know that the current signage will be removed and a new map will depict the new location of the purple trail to be strictly on the town-owned conservation land. Kate Dardinski reported that she removed the recently installed sign to discourage hikers from entering the trail from private property. Phil Thayer plans to meet with Kate Dardinski on April 18, 2023 at Forest Hills Farms to discuss plans to relocate the purple trail.

The second issue is about whether a resident who recently purchased a land-locked parcel which abuts the Town Forest has a right of access through the Town Forest conservation parcel where motorized vehicles are prohibited (with the exception for emergency vehicles). Andy Vorkink explained that the existence of a wood road does not necessarily give a right of access to and from abutting properties. Andy also explained that the Dalton family conservation easement recorded in 2007 on Lot 9-23, which prohibits the use of motorized vehicles, was recorded prior to the sale of the land to the Commission. Recording the restrictive conservation provisions prior to the warranty deed, means without question, that the easement in the warranty deed is subject to the motorized vehicle prohibition. Andy also pointed out that the deeded easement in the warranty deed runs solely along the wood road through Lot 9-25 from east to west across the town forest and not where the town put in the driveway from Exeter Road. Members of the Commission and town officials have offered to meet with the land-owner whose property abuts the Town Forest to discuss the terms of the Town Forest conservation easement, which is held by the Rockingham County Conservation District (RCCD). In 2008 the conservation land was officially designated as the Dalton Town Forest.

The Commission discussed plans to install a farm gate at the entrance of the Dalton Town Forest trail. The gate will be purchased from Northeast Farm and Fence with a lockbox and key to be and purchased and held by the Fire Department. John Hubbard, Director, North Hampton Public Works Department will work with the Commission to install the fence and lock. ***A motion was made by Phil Thayer, duly seconded by Andrew Vorkink, to authorize up to \$1,000.00 for the purchase of fencing materials to include a farm gate and two of a 6 x 6 x 8 wooden posts.*** The motion carried.

Trail Maintenance Update: Phil Thayer suggested upcoming projects for the coming year and suggested that upcoming work will be easier once the land dries from the spring rains. The Commission discussed adding bog bridges on the Dustin Booker Farm and Forest Hills Farm trails. Lisa Wilson spoke to Richard Luff, owner of the access easement to Forest Hills Farm,

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who supports the addition of bog bridges within the easement. The Commission also discussed future projects which include creating a trail at Nordstrom Eltzroth Woods, a new map and more trail markers for the Dalton Town Forest, and a map for Old Road Farm (Jeppeson) trails. It was also suggested to set up a system or create a form for persons hiking the trails to notify the Commission of any fallen trees or dangers along the trails.

Conservation Signage: Kate Dardinski installed the new maps at Forest Hills Farm, Dustin-Booker Farm, Corbett Farm, and Robie Conservation Easement.

Other Business: Audrey Prior spoke on behalf of the Agricultural Commission regarding trees shading the Community Garden planting area and requested to have four trees removed. Phil Thayer will cut the trees down and plan to haul them away.

American the Beautiful Grant for Philbrick Pond Restoration Work: Lisa Wilson shared with the Commission a letter of commitment from the town to collaborate and financially support the New Hampshire Coastal Program and The Nature Conservancy in their proposal to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) America the Beautiful Grant Challenge. Pete Steckler, Northeast Conservation Services, is working with The Nature Conservancy to apply for a \$500,000 grant to complete the Philbrick Pond restoration work which requires a 10% match from the community. Voters appropriated \$20,000 toward the project during the March 9, 2023 town election. Pete suggested that an additional \$5,000 or \$10,000 commitment from the Conservation Commission would help make the application more competitive. After some discussion, a ***motion was made by Phil Thayer, duly seconded by Lauri Etela, to approve \$10,000 from the commission's general fund as a cash match for the American the Beautiful Grant.*** The motion carried with Andrew Vorkink voting against the motion while noting that he is in favor of the project but preferred to commit \$5,000 at this time.

There being no further business to discuss, ***a motion was made by Phil Thayer, duly seconded by Audrey Prior,*** to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beverly Moore

Recording Secretary

“These minutes were prepared within five (5) business days as required by NH RSA 91-A:2, II. They will not be finalized until approved by the majority vote by the Commission”.