

**Conservation Commission Meeting
May 9, 2018
Town Room, Amherst Town Hall**

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order by Ms. Angus, Chair at 7:00 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Present: Angus, Allen, Clark, Healey, Brooks, Butler, Fair

Staff: Willson

CHAIR, DIRECTOR & WETLANDS ADM REPORTS

Willson stated Ziomek is at Town Meeting tonight, the CPA articles will be discussed and voted on tonight. There are two Open Space requests, Epstein and due diligence funds. Puffer's Pond breakfast is June 2nd. Willson stated there was a drowning at Puffer's Pond last week, AFD, APD, and Conservation all responded. It was a college student swimming across the pond possibly cramped up. She stated tonight we will be talking about 188 Sunderland Rd, there are a couple wetland issues going on but tonight we will strictly be talking about the agricultural use which is currently goats near wetland areas. Willson is looking at the other wetland concern involving a commercial business but we're waiting on a delineation to bring that to the Commission.

Willson stated staff has been interviewing candidates for summer crew. She stated the Mill Street bridge project is starting up and will fully be underway this summer. They did not need to submit an NOI because it is a state bridge project. There will be trail detour around the construction site. There are monitoring reports from Cole Subdivision and Pulpit Hill Solar in your packets.

Angus read an email sent to all Commissioners from Paul Bockelman, Town Manager, stating that all committee and board members whose term expires this year (June 2018) will get a term extension if desired until the Town Council starts working and can replace them. Healey stated she can't continue; she needs to resign due to personal reasons at the end of June. Angus suggests we look at everyone's summer schedules at our next mtg to see if we have enough people for four summer meetings. Willson provided Allen with a hard copy of the letter from Bockelman.

MINUTES

No minutes reviewed.

PERMITS/DISCUSSIONS

7:15 PM Conservation Land Management

Presentation – TOA Conservation Department staff – Brad Bordewieck & Tyler Pease

Bordewieck and Pease presented a slide show of current conservation land projects. Projects included Markert's

Pond flow structure, Puffer's Pond beaver dam, installed kiosk on N beach, new handicap accessible porta-potty S beach, Mt. Pollux maple tree removal, brush hogging various fields, line painting and parking signs at Puffer's Pond. Butler asked if they ever line paint at Amethyst Brook. He suggested having people park nose in and parking lot could hold more people. Bordewieck described Mass Wildlife Grant work at Lawrence Swamp, Eastman Brook & Atkins Flats. Pease stated they have been working with the Animal Control Officer with enforcement of the dog leash law at Amethyst Brook. They have been talking to some of the dog walking businesses in town about conservation land use. They are also dealing with illegal camping on conservation land. They spend time repairing equipment.

NO VOTE

7:35 PM Notice of Intent – TOA Conservation Department to replace a hiking trail bridge over the Amethyst Brook at Amethyst Conservation Area (Map 15B, Parcel 87).

Bordewieck stated they need to replace the bridge that washed out this summer. They are going to drag the pieces of the old bridge out of the water and bank where they sit right now. They would then install erosion control and start building the new abutments which will consist of either cribbing or wooden boxes. They plan to use three 50' telephone poles as supports for the bridge. They will then install the decking and railing. Willson stated some people came by the office asking about the bridge design and some wanted railings others did not. Old bridge did not have railings. Angus asked at what height do you need railings for safety. Bordewieck not sure. Willson asked if the footings were going to go in the ground or just sit on top. Bordewieck replied they are only excavating to make the abutments level so no more than a few inches. Butler asked if the decking would be as wide as it originally was. Bordewieck said the decking will be five feet wide, about the same as it was. Clark asked about the height, Bordewieck said they are adding two 6x6 blocks so the bridge will be about one foot higher than it was and longer.

Butler moved and Clark seconded. Commission VOTED (7-0-0) to issue the Order of Conditions with special conditions as discussed.

7:50 PM Informal Discussion – Agricultural activity in resource area at 188 Sunderland Rd. (Map 2C, Parcel 13).

Willson stated tonight we are looking at an agricultural use questions at 188 Sunderland Rd. There are some goats in the side yard of the property. She presented photos of the property and its current use. There is a wet area that the goats currently drink and walk through. As discussed earlier, the other issue on the site is a commercial landscaping company that has been storing equipment near the wetland. But tonight we are just talking about the agricultural use. Scott Leonard, owner of the goats but not the property, stated he lived at 150 Sunderland Rd (property abutting to the south) for 25 years operating Leonard Farm. He stated he farmed the 150 Sunderland Rd. land and the 3 acre back portion of 188 Sunderland Rd. He stopped farming 150 Sunderland Rd in 2014. He stated that water floods much of both properties every spring, and he would wait for it to dry and then plow. He showed pictures showing the water on the properties at various times of year. Willson asked if he leases the back 3 acres of 188 Sunderland Rd. Leonard said yes. The goats provide a manure source for the field where he grows vegetables. Angus said there seem to be different areas of the site. Willson provided an aerial photo of the property. Angus asked how long the goats had been there and was wondering why this is now an issue. Leonard said about ten years. Willson stated the Town has been getting a number of calls over the past two years about the goats, sometimes because they have escaped. Recently one resident has been concerned about their impact on the wetland.

Jim Johnson, property manager for the residential portion of the property, stated Paul Dibenedetto the

property owner has hired SWCA/NEE to do a delineation of the property. Willson stated the delineation is primarily for the pad area. If they are ag exempt for the goats they don't want to get that area delineated. Brooks said it's most likely a wet meadow, it has been altered. Butler stated if it's agriculturally exempt does it matter if it's a wetland? Willson said that's the point, that's what we need to decide tonight whether the Commission feels this is an agriculturally exempt activity. Willson stated the goats have been there for ten years, but there also needs to be a commercial use, the only thing that's been suggested is that he goat manure is used to produce crops that are sold. Leonard stated he lets the manure dry where the goats are then peels it off and mixes it with leaves to make manure for the field where he grows vegetables that he sells.

Butler stated he feels it is agriculturally exempt, but maybe there are some things we can suggest that could protect the wetland more than the current situation. Healey expressed concern about the manure run off. Willson stated if that area could be fenced off the vegetation could re-grow and filter runoff. Leonard stated knotweed would grow in without the goats. Willson asked if he had plans to increase the number of goats at this location, he said no.

The Commission decided they consider the keeping of the goats within the wetland an agricultural exemption. The Commission recommends installing a fence to keep the goats out of the wetland but that is up to Mr. Leonard.

NO VOTE

Miscellaneous Untimed Items:

- Topics not reasonable anticipated 48 hours prior to the meeting.

None.

Adjournment

Voted unanimously to adjourn the open meeting at 8:45 PM.