

**Conservation Commission Meeting  
February 10, 2016  
Town Room, Amherst Town Hall**

**MINUTES**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Meeting called to order by Ms. Angus, Chair at 7:05 p.m.

**ATTENDANCE**

Present: Angus, Boice, Allen, Brooks, Clark, Butler

Staff: Ziomek, Willson

**CHAIR, DIRECTOR & WETLANDS ADM REPORTS**

Willson stated the RFP for farming at Wentworth Farm will be issued again on Friday, 2/12. Applicants will have three weeks to respond. If we get any responses we will need to create a review subcommittee again. Ziomek suggested we give the applicants at least a month to respond. Butler asked whether we could lease the land at Wentworth closer to Old Farm Rd to the north of Owen's Pond. Ziomek said we're supposed to APR that land and we shouldn't put a farmer on it until it's APR'd. Also the land we're currently offering is the most recently farmed at Wentworth. Butler said we should include something in RFP about dealing with walkers, dogs, bikers, etc. Ziomek stated people at Amethyst Brook have gotten used to and are respectful of the Community Gardens and Wm Levine's ag use. Butler expressed concern about replacing early successional habitat with monoculture of farming. Massachusetts is lacking early successional habitat. Ziomek that is a good discussion for the land management plan for Wentworth. It's a balance between some of the public saying they would like to see more conservation land used for farming vs those that want early successional for wildlife. Butler said we should also protect mid-successional the scrub/shrub type habitat. Ziomek that could be addressed in land management plans with some 1-2 yr mowing and some 5-7 yr mowing. Brooks likes the larger picture and would like to eventually look at the total data for all conservation areas for different habitats to see what we should be preserving. Ziomek said staff, at some point, could put together maps showing that data and have a working meeting with the Commission.

Willson stated she visited Crotty Hall and observed sediment getting through silt fence, she showed some photos. The last round of sampling of the Fearing Brook was conducted. NEE to put together final report showing sampling results and remedial recommendations. Willson will be buying signs and drain markers. The grant money must be spent by the end of June. Ziomek suggested Willson present results to the Commission at some point.

Ziomek stated there is a group that wants to do a polar plunge at Puffer's Pond and he has told them to submit a application for an event on Conservation land. Willson added it's the same fraternity that came to a meeting in October but then never had the event. Willson asked if the Commission would like them to come to a meeting again since it's a new group of students? Ziomek said they must have insurance. Boice said they don't need to come back before the Commission they just need to provide everything Commission required from first application.

Ziomek stated that he has been working with Kestrel and others on new vernal pools and breeding habitat for Eastern Spade Foot toads. He's part of a working group trying to help the toads. There is a public meeting on the rattlesnakes in the Quabbin on 2/23. Ziomek wants to go and speak in favor of it.

## **MINUTES**

Review/approve Minutes of 7-22-15 & 8-26-15

**Brooks moved and Allen seconded. Commission VOTED (4-0-2 Angus, Butler abstained) to approve the minutes of 7-22-15.**

**Brooks moved and Butler seconded. Commission VOTED (4-0-2 Angus, Clark abstained) to approve the minutes of 8-26-15.**

## **PERMITS/DISCUSSIONS**

**7:15 PM Application for Research on Cons Land** – Julie Emerson, Amherst College, goldenrod gall field lab.

Julie Emerson, Amherst College, stated this lab has run at Amherst College since 1995 she has been running it since 2005. She is looking for early successional fields where goldenrod will come in and grow. It's a perennial plant that propagates through seeds. Lab studies galls created by a fly larva that burrow into the goldenrod plant. She presented some gall balls. Larva is a food source for other insects and birds. There are a variety of insects that make galls. Lab studies what affects the survival of the gall, they collect the galls and take them back to the lab to dissect. They are looking for fallow fields that haven't been mowed for two to three years.

She would like to take the lab to Sweet Alice Conservation Area and potentially other areas. Ziomek asked how many galls the class would need. Emerson responded each student collects 15 so several hundred. That's why they like to rotate fields because they don't want to have an impact on insect or bird populations. Ziomek stated we have roughly 250 acres of fields on conservation land that we never mow all in one year so we have a lot of fallow fields. Poddick and Eastman Brook have acres of fallow fields.

Angus asked if this was a request for a number of locations. Emerson said yes, to allow them to look at all conservation areas for fields that would work.

**Boice moved and Allen seconded. Commission VOTED (6-0-0) to approve the use of Sweet Alice and other conservation area fields for the goldenrod gall research.**

### **Miscellaneous Untimed Items:**

- COC – Olympia Oaks, 85 Olympia Drive

Commission members conducted a site visit today. Willson has gone out a few times over the past year and a half because they had a lot of trouble vegetating the yard areas. Willson went out in December and finally gave them the OK on the grass areas. Today looked at permanent markings along wetland buffer zone, stormwater basin and catch basins look fine.

**Brooks moved and Butler seconded. Commission VOTED (6-0-0)** to issue the Certificate of Compliance.

- Review/vote 2016 CPA Proposals

Boice stated that there are three Open Space proposals before the CPAC this year, due diligence, Hoerle APR, and Stowes/Stozs property. She presented a summary sheet of the projects. She would like a vote from the Commission in support and a ranking of the projects. The CPAC public hearing is February 23rd, Commission members are encouraged to come. Butler asked what is happening with the Town Common and CPAC funds. Ziomek said we didn't get grants two years in a row for the improvements to the North Common so the Planning Dept is asking for the entire cost from CPAC, \$190,000, for Phase I which includes design and initial construction. Would come back for remaining funds, total around \$500,000. Butler is that Open Space? Ziomek no, it falls under historic preservation/recreation.

**Brooks moved and Clark seconded. Commission VOTED (6-0-0)** to support the three Open Space proposals and approve the language as written summarizing the projects for CPAC.

- Topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours prior to the meeting

### **Adjournment**

**Voted** unanimously to adjourn the open meeting at 8:07 PM.