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2017



APPROVED

### Huntington Conservation Commission Meeting

Thursday, October 12, 2017 Huntington Public Library

**Present:** Rebecca Ryan (Co-chair), Sheri Lynn (Co-chair), Maggie Mae Anderson, Guthrie Smith, Darlene Palola, Jenna Koloski, & Jeannette Segale.

**Absent:** JB Bryan

**Others present:** Heidi Racht, Carl Ashley, Maureen Ashley, Bob Heiser (VLT), and Steve Libby (VRC)

**Clerk:** Jeannette Segale took minutes in absence of the clerk.

**Call to Order:** Ryan called to order at 7:06PM

**Minutes of September 14<sup>th</sup>:** Motion made by Lynn to accept minutes, Anderson seconded, all approved.

**Mail:** No mail

**Public Comment:** Heidi Racht requested funding help from HCC for removal of knotweed around town offices and fire station. Racht stated "ongoing battle to eradicate invasive plant. Pat Fitzgerald (excavator) excavated plant and delivered to CSWD. Project bigger than planned and invoice totaled \$552. Racht stated the bill would "use up available discretionary funds", and "any monetary compensation from HCC would be greatly appreciated." Lynn stated the commission would discuss further at close of meeting, and expressed appreciation in Rachts ongoing efforts to remove the invasive plan.

#### **Town Forest/Moore Trust Property update:**

Lynn opened discussion asking to Libby (VT River Conservancy) to discuss Moore property.

Libby explained that he saw the situation as a possible 3 phase process:

Phase 1: Moore Trust proposed 1 acre donation, however town regulations appear to require 5 acres. Some discussion around this.

Phase 2: Larger parcel (the additional 72 acres) would be excellent public use.

Phase 3: Timbervest property: Borders Moore property and would be valuable addition to public lands.

**Moore property update:** Ryan shared email received from Wendi Moore representing Moore Family Trust stating concerns about cost of updating Forestry plan (\$1710), taxes that aren't being reduced, lawyer fees, and "town demanding that parcel given is at least 5 acres." Moore stated they may have to put entire parcel on market and forgo donation. Moore asked if there's a possibility to receive help with cost of forestry plan.

Discussion followed: Koloski asked Libby (VRC): if a one acre parcel would have value. Libby's response: *"Swimming holes are important resources, when there's an opportunity to preserve one, jump on it. Pools in Cobb brook are valuable. The important piece is that we begin with the initial agreement of one acre. Then we can begin looking at parking and use etc."*

**Action:** HCC will check with Town lawyer to for clarification about the possibility a one acre waiver be put in the town plan, due to the landowner offering of a one acre donation for swimming hole.

Libby mentioned pursuing the additional acreage if the swimming hole is separated from the property. Libby is prepared to fundraise for the transaction cost of the subdivision.

Bob Heiser from VLT offered following suggestion: *"Taxes are approx. \$5000, forestry plan about \$1700. Ask landowner if we can have a bit of time if we help cover the approx. \$7000. Vermont housing and conservation Board might help by using their feasibility fund which could help towards appraisal. Ask VH&CB for 5k, and maybe HCC/Town could cover the other 5k. Would the landowner then give us a year to pursue the additional land purchase?"*

Heiser to pursue the donation of the swimming hole. Appraisal is first step. Should be able to get an appraisal and apply for an application within this fiscal year.

Lynn raised question about how to ensure bordering neighbor's engagement and concerns is assured. Libby: *"we need to have the option/donation first, a mechanism to obtain the site. Then we'll have time to examine landowners concerns. Current technical assistance grant might help with landowner concerns."*

Heiser stated: still haven't made request with VHCB for \$5k funding.

**Action item Ryan:** Ask town lawyer, what is the status of a one acre donation? What is your legal decision? Is 1 or 5 acres okay? What are the regs?

**Action Item:** Heiser offered to have conceptual call with VHCB about funding. Heiser looking into funding for renewing and updating Forest management plan and taxes. Then asking landowner if that will allow enough breathing room to wait a year prior to placing land on market.

Heiser: Needs to be a straightforward conversation. Suggested an option agreement for the 72 acres at a certain price. If not could we have the 1 acre donation? Makes more sense to have both town forest and swimming hole together as it's easier to get funding. Grant could help engage the community. Community has an interest in pursuing another town forest. Bob suggested that our response should be: *"We'll do option agreement for the entire property, and fund her requested items."*

Steve noted that the 75 acres with the swimming hole will be a more attractive funding. If just one acre the River Conservancy could help with funding the aspects involved. The Vermont Land Trust would become involved with funding for the larger parcel.

**Action Item:** Ryan will respond to Moore email. Ryan requested Bob to review prior to sending. The response to include that we're looking into grant funding for Forest Plan, taxes, etc.

**Timbervest property:** Adjoins Moore property. Bob Heiser VLT reported: Asking price recently lowered to \$1.05 million. Ethan Tapper (VT Forester) and Heiser walked property and noted the following: several drainages, abuts Wildlife Management area and VT state land. Nice plateau, chain of beaver ponds, spectacular views, some mature wood, some heavily logged. Purchase would require a lot of work on the Towns part. Numerous recreational possibilities. Mentioned the possibility of checking with state to see if they would be interested in purchasing part of property. Or if state not interested, look into federal forest funding.

**Property Surveys:** Need clear vision for Parking. Palola reported- 4 property owners. Kellogg's-no survey. Ashley current. Burdock-uncertain.

**Action Item:** Gather additional information about which property owner we talk to about an easement for parking. Continue to investigate property surveys on record.

**Camp on Moore property:** Clarified that camp is not currently part of one or five acre possibility.

**Community engagement:** more to follow depending on outcome of initial steps.

**Recreation Community Assistance Planning Program (RCAPP):** Koloski reported: RCAPP will kick off with summit to include the 10 towns which received grant funding to meet and have a session about what towns hope will be to get out of the process. Koloski identified a need to have a steering committee which should consist of diverse community members including representatives from school board, planning commission, trail builders etc. Meeting to take place November 17<sup>th</sup> with time and location TBD. Towns' people to reach out to if they would be interested in participating on steering committee included: Paul Swartzkopf, Jennifer Esser, Joe Segale, Breck Knauft, Sara Jane, and Wally Jenkins. Sherri Lynn volunteered that she would like to be involved as a rep for the HCC.

**Action Item:** Koloski creating a list of possible steering committee participants to share with members.

**Friends of Gillette Pond Funding request Public Meeting:** reminder Monday Oct 16<sup>th</sup> 6:30 at church annex. HCC members agreed that we compromised on \$50k-- but we didn't agree on keeping the dam or getting rid of it. Lynn noted that the Huntington grand list is less than half of what Richmond resources are. No evidence that dam will be removed by state. While the funding request met some of the criteria, Huntington has a smaller town resource base and find it difficult to fund 100K. Some of the Committee members struggled with natural resources funding aspect. Current dam is low risk. Anderson mentioned that the value of kayaking, skiing and recreation on the pond is of vital consideration.

**Storm water:** next month

**Wild parsnip:** next month

**Budget:** Vote on 2018 budget: Lynn motion to approve. Guthrie seconded. Passed unanimously.

**Action Item:** Lynn to check with Barb about budget vote.

**Action Item:** Clerk recruitment: Maggie Mae will check with Sara Jane to determine if she would like to take on the position.

**Annual AVCC summit:** HCC will reimburse Palola fee for attending.

**Knotweed:** Lynn made motion for \$150 towards removal of the knotweed. Maggie Mae seconded. All approved. Some discussion around whether proper procedures were followed for vote. Members not clear, but since funding was within our discretionary budget, members supported the request.

**Invasive Species:** Anderson reported: Mike Bald of Got Weeds would like to attend HCC meeting soon and determine a plan for next spring.

**Action item:** Anderson to contact Mike to determine how much time is needed at our December meeting.

**Co-Chairs:** Lynn mentioned her term ends in March and doesn't plan for reappointment. Ryan mentioned she would like to pass on her co-chairmanship in the spring. Both asked the committee to consider the positions. Ryan would like to turn over chair in the spring 2018.

**AVCC Annual meeting:** Ryan and Palola debriefed: excellent informative meeting. Shared that the member of HCC should attempt to attend planning commission, and other town meetings.

**Times Ink Article:** Palola Storm water news and photos. Also, request for Bryan to have spring mushroom walk and mushroom article. Ryan suggested: share information about education concerning bears and bird feeders.

**Next month:** the process of applying for conservation funds

**9:06PM:** Ryan made motion to adjourn. Anderson seconded. Unanimous agreement.