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2018



Huntington Conservation Commission
Minutes for November 9, 2017
APPROVED

PRESENT: Rebecca Ryan (Co-Chair), Sheri Lynn (Co-Chair), Maggie Mae Anderson, JB Bryan, Darlene Palola, Jenna Koloski & Jeannette Segale
OTHERS PRESENT: Shawn Smith, Melissa Hoffman
CLERK: Maggie Mae Anderson took minutes in the absence of the clerk.

Call to Order: 7 pm: meeting called by Sheri, meeting minutes approved by all 6 members present.

Public Comment: Shawn Smith and Melissa Hoffman of Earth Assets and the Teal Farm started a conversation with the HCC inviting collaboration between the two groups. Ms. Smith is a lawyer who specialized in land management along with being a real estate agent. She is very familiar with complicated transactions and property situations. Ms. Smith was offering her help with our attempts to purchase a new town forest. Ms. Hoffman spoke about how the Teal farm is focusing on working habitat and wild habitats and how they can be mixed together. She also is hopeful to integrate the community into what they are doing up at their farm and possible have co-sponsored events there. Their property is good habitat for Bobolinks and a short discussion about them proceeded. What they are doing is sometimes referred to as "wild farming".

Each committee member took a moment to introduce themselves and then the conversation turned to the Town Forest. Sheri and Jenna attempted to fill Shawn and Melissa in on the background of trying to find land for another, more accessible town forest. Jenna then described what has been happening with our efforts, hopes and dreams about the Moore property. Neighbors have already voiced concerns about this property. Rebecca has spoken to the Moore family members, they have listed the property but are still open to selling to the town. Jenna mentioned the Vermont Huts Association and how they might be helpful with the cabin on that property. We still aren't clear if the option to receive the one acre with the swimming hole is an option with the property currently on the market as one whole parcel. (Copy and paste whatever it is the Rebecca read about requesting the one acre)

Public comment sent via email:
Dear Conservation Commission,

Thank you for providing the document (4-23-15) from the Agency of Natural Resources staff regarding the pros and cons of dam removal from Gillette Pond. I do appreciate your efforts and want our Town to come to an informed, science-based, long-term ecologically beneficial decision for the future of the Gillett Pond wetland complex.

I read with sadness about the current condition of the pond, including silting and phosphorus levels that have rendered the pond eutrophic by VTDEC standards. The TWO PAGES of "Cons" versus three short "Pro" statements is scientifically significant and also troubling. The "Pro" statements aren't even unqualified pros — they each have their issues.

Given that reduction of phosphorus load into the Lake Champlain basin and the restoration of native habitat in the Winooski watershed are top priorities of the VTDEC, I hope — and somewhat expect— your board will introduce this document at your meeting tonight when you discuss Gillett Pond and discuss it's impact on your recent support of the FoGP funding request. There is still time to reconsider

the impact that a 150-year dam project will have on the brook, the wetlands, the downstream habitat and eventually Vermont's crown jewel: Lake Champlain.

I URGE YOU to re-examine your vote and take time to properly consider expert opinions with an eye to our children's, children's future. I will also forward you a copy of an email I sent to the Selectboard with resources available to provide science-based, expert help with this decision. These experts are available AT MINIMAL IF ANY COST. Should you decide you require additional time to reconsider and re-examine your earlier decision and recommendation, I strongly urge you to communicate that to the Selectboard in explicit terms.

Thank you again for your efforts.

—Brett Lindemuth

Workplan Updates:

Rebecca shared the following from Barbara Elliott regarding the zoning regulations and property donations (this conversation began regarding Huntington's 5-acre minimum parcel zoning law and whether the Moore family could donate the acre next to Cobb Brook to the town for conservation purposes):

Here is the information provided by Town Attorney Jim Carroll:

1. Jim would need to examine the deeds, land surveys and our zoning regs in detail in order to make a firm assessment. He would need to determine that there is not a conservation restriction on the deed that would restrict subdivision.
2. At a quick exam, it look like article 9 (4)(b) of our regs along with the definitions in Article 2, that we would be able to get a conditional use waiver of the minimum acreage requirement from the DRB based on recreational & outdoor use.
3. We should consider how would we ensure this would not negatively impact neighboring lots/adjoining landowners. We would probably need to get written landowner approval to use the parking area or make a new one on a portion that the town would own.
4. It would be appropriate for the HCC to request a meeting with the DRB to discuss this – Jim thinks it makes the most sense for HCC to spearhead this

All agreed that we'll proceed with the technical grant process, and not pursue property donation/possible town forest purchase in the meantime.

Technical Assistance Grant:

- (Jenna) We have received \$10,000 worth of consulting to build a town forest plan. Updates: 5 people have agreed to be on the Steering Committee,
- Summit is the first step to work together and define what we want to get out of it, then the steering committee meets to plan outreach, followed by specific committee meetings and then the steering committee then comes back together for a few final meetings.
- November 17th is the first meeting...can anyone else make it?
- Jenna will follow up with two more people and hope to have the 5 if not 7 people. Jenna will know more after the summit and will send out an email to let us all know.
- We're stepping back from pursuing the Moore property until the TAG comes through and see where that process and that information gets us.

Public Comment:

Ms. Smith asked if we had a mission statement and no one was able to quote it directly or find it on line due to lack of internet connection.

Ms. Hoffman asked what would be an appropriate subject matter to create a learning opportunity/workshop up at Shop/Teal farm? The committee asked to get a list of what they are currently doing so we can begin to brainstorm what we can combine with and offer as an educational experience.

Conservation Fund Application:

- The Select Board vote has been postponed until the November 20th. (Rebecca forwarded an email and I need to find it and copy and paste it and place it in the Public comment section). Rebecca spoke of how to improve the way the committee grants requests for funds. How can we bring in agricultural, recreation, conservation, historic, etc., people to help us in the decision-making process? How do we read an application and have a neutral body to make an unbiased decision? Is there a better way to handle the next application? Is there a way to have a public hearing before it went to the select board? How would we get experts to come in and give us advice and an opinion? How do other towns do their application process? Let's look and see what other towns are doing. In the future, can we do executive sessions? Can we vote in private?
- **ACTION:** Make this discussion an agenda item for next month
- **ACTION:** Sheri will research Hinesburg and Jenna will look into how Monkton handles their applications. In the future, can we do executive sessions? Can we vote in private? Agenda item: on-going discussion of how to improve this process
- **ACTION:** Rebecca will create a shared document that we can add people to that we think would be good "experts" to consult in our decision-making processes.

Storm Water Project:

- It's done! Darlene wrote an article for the Times Ink.
- Annual reports to needs to speak to the storm water project and how it only cost \$2000. BPMS kids came to see the finished project. Could something be done to help people address their own driveways?

Clerk Position:

-Could it be shared between two people?

-**ACTION:** Maggie Mae to ask Sarah Jane if she'd share the position with Natalie.

Invasive Species:

- Mike Bald will be at the next meeting
- **ACTION:** Maggie Mae to prepare the maps and site information and other details he needs.
- Wild Parsnip? Can we hire a private crew? Can we meet with Yogi and ask how to support this effort? Ask Mike his opinion about mowing and how to proceed. Could we have a Parsnip Pulling Festival?
- **AGENDA ITEMS FOR DECEMBER:**

- look at application process, Mike Bald (ask about parsnips), clerk position, update on the TAG summit, cookie share
- **MAPLE SUGAR OPEN HOUSE:**
- Sugar maple open house- how can we encourage our makers to sign up for the state-wide festival? Can we give funds to help cover the fee for the joining the state network? Maps at Beaudry's are important. January agenda must decide about this.
- **HCC CO-CHAIRS:**
- HCC co-chairs...next steps...anyone interested? Sheri is done in March 2018. Rebecca would like to step down but will stay until someone else is in the position.
- Sheri motions to adjure... Jeanette seconded; we all agreed.