

**Town of Bennington
Conservation Commission
Minutes of Meeting - December 18, 2014
Minutes Approved:**

Present: John Baybutt - Chairman, Valerie Germain, Jon Manley, and Joe MacGregor, Steve Willette

Agenda

- 1. Approve Minutes**
- 2. After School Science Program**
- 3. Trestle Bridge Maintenance/Concerns**
- 4. Timber Cut & CC Funding Bill**
- 5. Other**

- 1. Approve Minutes - The minutes from November 20, 2014 minutes were approved as written**
- 2. After School Science Program - Valerie presented the After School Science Program she will be facilitating for Pierce School students in 2nd - 4th grades. This program is intended to provide environmental/conservation education to the youth of Bennington. Valerie has met with Ann Allwarden, Principal of Pierce School, the PTO, and the Bennington Recreation Committee to outline the goals and objectives of the program. ~The Bennington Recreation Committee is willing to co-sponsor the event with the Conservation Commission.**

There will be three five week sessions as follows:

- Session 1: January 14th - February 11th (3rd and 4th graders)**
- Session 2: March 11th - April 8th (3rd and 4th graders)**
- Session 3: May 6th - June 3rd (2nd graders)**

Session 1 focus: Mammal and bird identification & habitats (including tracking in winter)

Session 2 focus: Tree/plant identification (native and invasive) and relationship to wildlife

Session 3 focus: Soil and water and the habitats they provide

~ Funding for the program was not available from the ConVal School District and a grant which was applied for from the NH IEEE, was not awarded.

~Valerie made a request to the Conservation Commission to sponsor and fund the program based on the figures calculated in the grant request.

~Commissioners discussed the importance of conservation education to youth and of creating a new line item in the budget to be called Conservation Education and to allocate \$500 to the new line item.

~A motion made for CC to sponsor the program; it was seconded and approved.

~A motion was made to create a new line item in the Conservation Budget to be called 'Conservation Education' and allocate \$500 (to be taken from the CC General Purpose/Miscellaneous Line Item) to support the after school science program and other educational outreach programs; it was seconded and approved.

Action Item: Valerie will reach out to the Harris Center as a resource for the program

3. Trestle Bridge Maintenance/Concern - This past spring, it was noted that someone had put locked gates on bridge that crossed over the Contoocook River - the Town Hall and CC members were not informed or aware of who erected the gates. Commissioners discussed how the gates disrupt a wildlife corridor as deer have been observed using the bridge. There was also a concern that this is a hiking trail that cannot be utilized when the gate is up.

This fall, the bridge deck was replaced, without the knowledge of the Town or CC and without consent of Peter Leischman who owns the railroad. Jon suggested contacting Chris Gamache of the NH Trail Commission and also the Department of Resources & Economic Development regarding this matter.

Action Item: Steve Willette will contact Chris Gamache

4. Timber Cut & CC Funding Bill - Representative and CC member, Jon Manley has presented a bill to the NH House of Representatives: 2015-H-0150-L -- allowing municipalities to dedicate a percentage of timber yield taxes to the conservation fund. If it becomes a law, it would need to be presented to voters as a warrant article.

~Nik Coates from NHACC has contacted Jon and offered to help move this forward

5. Other-

~ Commissioners would like any leftover money emcumbered and deposited into the Town's Conservation Account

~Commissions discussed the difficulties of convincing land owners to put their land into conservation as financial burdens make it prohibitive for many land owners.

The CC discussed how best to approach land owners personally to encourage land conservation.

~River Committee Members shared a project before the boards in Hillsborough. A developer will set aside 64 acres for conservation as part of a commercial development which involves excavation 100 feet off of a hilltop from a 165 acre parcel of land behind Hillsboro Chrysler. 2.86 acres of wetland will be impacted and 64 acres will be set aside as Compensatory Wetland Mitigation.

~Joe reported that the new saw system for trail maintenance was ordered for \$462 at Tyler's

There being no other business at hand, the meeting was adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Valerie Germain, Bennington Conservation Commission