

TOWN OF BENNINGTON

Conservation Commission

Minutes of Meeting- January 19, 2017

Minutes Approved on-

Present: Valerie Germain, Stephen Willette, Joseph MacGregor, Tom James, and Mike Munhall

Valerie Germain called the meeting to order at 6:39 p.m.

1. Minutes
 - a. The minutes from the December 15, 2016 meeting were approved with a minor amendment.
2. Railroad Trestle
 - a. Joe MacGregor reported to the Commissioners that the River Committee has heard questions regarding the gates on the Railroad Trestle. Joe was able to provide the River Committee with information. It was reported that with the gates being closed, snowmobile tracks have been observed going into the Edes Forest.
3. Warrant Articles
 - a. NRI Phase II
 - i. Valerie and John have drafted and submitted a warrant article for funds for Phase II of the NRI in the amount of \$2900.
 - ii. It was noted that \$5,500 has been deposited into the account from taxes that have been collected for land use change. John will research if the money in the account can be used or if it is earmarked for specific usage.
 - b. Timber and Gravel Tax
 - i. Joe and Jon have drafted a warrant article that would direct the Selectmen to allocate part of the unanticipated timber and gravel tax collected to be placed into a conservation fund.
 - ii. Joe spoke with Denise French regarding the warrant article and was told that the wording required a designated dollar amount. Joe explained that it would be part of unanticipated funds. Denise French will forward the wording to the Town Attorney. Joe asked that if wording needs to be changed, he would like to be part of the discussion with the DRA. At this time any money collected from Timber and Gravel Tax has been going into the General Fund creating a surplus to offset taxes.
 - iii. Joe will follow up with Denise French regarding where the warrant article wording is at with the Town Attorney.

4. Earth Day
 - a. It was reported that the Conservation Commissioners did not have any money left in their budget line in order to reimburse Valerie Germain for expenses incurred from Earth Day. The Commissioners feel that she should be reimbursed for this.
5. River Committee news
 - a. Joe, on behalf of the River Committee, reported that the invoice for funds to replace or repair monitoring equipment for the River had been submitted to Denise French. The River Committee had addressed the invoice to the Conservation Commission. Denise French reported that as there is not money at this time in the Conservation Commissioners budget, the Selectmen decided to cover the \$100 invoice from Town funds. A line item will be added to cover this cost in the Conservation Commissioners 2018 budget. Joe reported that most Towns on the River Committee cover this cost from their Conservation Fund not their Conservation budget.
 - b. It was asked if money collected from land use changes tax can be utilized for purposes such as the River Committee invoice and/or how can money collected in this account be utilized. The Conservation Commissioners will follow up on this.
 - c. Joe will ask for guidelines for a conservation fund from other members on the River Committee and find out how this fund is funded.
6. Chairman position
 - a. Valerie offered to co-chair if anyone was interested. Steve Willette expressed an interest in co-chairing with Valerie. Joe nominated Steve to co-chair with Valerie. All were in favor.
7. Annual Report
 - a. The Commissioners reviewed and approved a draft to be included in the Town Annual Report.
 - b. It was noted that the Commissioners should consider creating a mailing to inform the voters of the warrant article for Phase II of the NRI.
8. NRI
 - a. Phase I of the NRI included seven maps. At this time the Commissioners have two maps to review and verify road names, lakes, rivers, etc. before the other maps will be printed.
 - b. The Commissioners reviewed and noted changes to the large topographical map and unfragmented lands map. Pictures of these changes will be forwarded to Jeff Littleton. The Commissioners will contact Jeff regarding whether secondary roads will be labeled on the maps. The Commissioners reviewed the Bennington tax maps and will forward a picture to Jeff to show the discrepancy of one of the Town lines between Greenfield and Bennington.
9. Goals for 2017
 - a. The Commissioners tabled creating a list of goals for 2017 until their next meeting.

10. Announcement

- a. Valerie shared with the Commissioners that Ben Haubrich was named Volunteer of the Year. He has worked to put in a ridge trail.

As there was no other business at hand, the meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by

Karen Bartlett

Conservation Commission Recording Secretary