

Town of Bennington
Conservation Commissioners
Minutes of Meeting - January 17, 2019
Minutes Approved on-

Present: Mike Munhall, Jon Manley, Joe MacGregor, and Tom James
Guests: Jeff Rose, Kristie LaPlante- Town Administrator

Co-Chair Mike Munhall called the meeting to order at 6:37 p.m.

1. Minutes

- a. Jon Manley made a motion to accept the minutes from the December 20, 2018 meeting. The motion was seconded by Tom James and all were in favor.

2. Guest Speaker

Kristie LaPlante, Town Administrator, met with the Commissioners. The Commissioners asked if she had a vision for the Commission, she feels that she has much she can learn from the Board. She asked if there would be a possibility to hold an Earth Day event twice a year. She thanked Joe MacGregor and Jon Manley for walking the Greenfield-Bennington line with her so she could learn where the markers are and the history of the town in regards to the lines. She asked if there are ways to get the Conservation Commission involved in the community more with events such as opportunities to walk the Forest. Joe spoke to this highlighting opportunities he has given the school on his own time for Forest walks, events in conjunction with the Library for story walks, and Earth Day. Mike Munhall has gotten newspaper coverage of a number of outreach opportunities. The Commissioners are open to other ideas. Kristie suggested afternoon walks.

a. Mike Munhall had asked Kristie to touch upon the topic of timber cuts. Previously, notices went out in regards to intents to cut timber. Kristie said she will send those out. Joe MacGregor asked if there was possibility to receive intents to cut prior to approval in order for them to have the opportunity to share any information they were aware of that may be helpful for the Selectmen or the logging company filing to have knowledge of prior to approval. Kristie asked if the prior notice would be in order for the Conservation Commission to influence Selectmen approval. The Conservation Commission noted timber cuts in other towns that have impacted water supplies and water flow. When intent to cuts come to the Town, there are guides (form not completed, not signed, wrong land use listed, etc.) to the only reason the Board of Selectmen may decide not to approve. Wetlands are not a listed reason as to why a cut may not be approved. Kristie did locate a Guide to Property Owners When Planning A Timber Cut in Hancock, New Hampshire online that she will forward to the Commissioners. Kristie offered to reach out to Hancock and UNH to see if they have a model policy that the Commissioners can review. Kristie also offered to see if UNH will do a training in this area.

b. Mike Munhall updated the Commissioners of his discussion with Kristie in regards to the Timber and Gravel taxes. State statute forbids an ongoing transfer of funds to the Conservation Commission from timber or gravel taxes. The warrant in 2019 will ask for 50% of taxes to be transferred to the Conservation Commission. In 2020, 75% will be requested and in 2021, 100% will be requested. Joe and Jon have previously gone to the legislature to discuss these taxes and were told that the Select Board already have the authority to allocate this money. This differs from what the Town has been told by Town Counsel and Department of Revenue. Kristie will contact Towns that were on the legislative board to discuss.

c. Kristie forwarded to Mike an email in regards to the Barry 4-H club camp opportunity.

d. Jeff Rose met with the Commissioners and Kristie LaPlante. He noted that while on his walk of a current use land of a property on North Bennington Rd (Map 21, Lot 3-2), he

discovered an above ground dumping site including vehicles, paint cans, fuel containers, tires, etc. Jeff shared pictures that he took during his walk. Kristie thanked Jeff for bringing this forward, she was unaware that the property was in this status. She suggested that the Town reach out to the current owner. This is a matter outside of the Conservation Commissioners jurisdiction and should be brought forward to the Selectmen. The Commissioners would recommend the Selectmen to reach out to the current owner. Kristie asked that the Commissioners email her in regards to Jeff coming to them with this concern so that she can bring it forward to the Selectmen. The Commissioners thanked Jeff for bringing this to their attention.

3. NRI

. The NRI is now an available resource that the Select Board and town planning boards can use for governing the growth of Bennington. There is a copy of the NRI at the GEP Dodge Library for public review and study. Mike provided the Commissioners and Jeff with a personal copy of the NRI.

4. Annual Report

. Mike sent the Commissioners a copy of the annual report that he has submitted.

5. Antrim Conservation Commission

. Joe, Jon, and Mike reported about meeting with the Antrim Conservation Commission in regards to putting in a trail on the 25-acres of land Antrim owns in Bennington at the location of their town well. The property has been walked by Mike and Jon, it was noted that blazing has been done. It was reported that Antrim's new well has been drilled and the surveying was done by Dennis McKenney, it was not. Joe and Jon noted that Antrim Conservation Commission has expressed interest and excitement with this project.

6. Edes Picnic Tables

. There is no update on this project.

7. NH Land Use Manual

. 8 copies of The NH Land Use Manual has been ordered by the Town and will be available for public use at the Town Hall.

8. New Business

. River Committee

i. Joe updated the Commissioners of the discussion the River Committee has had in regards to plastic. A presentation was made to the River Committee by individuals from Contoocook who have received a grant to create and distribute bags with information about recycling and decreasing the impact that plastics have on the environment that were given out for free at voting. It was also noted that the Commissioners have begun to notice restaurants using materials other than plastic that is biodegradable. Joe will forward the information from those restaurants to the restaurants in town. Mike has also found recyclable trash bags made by ProGreen that are 100% compostable. The Commissioners will look for ways to promote, encourage, and educate individuals in town about environmentally friendly products.

ii. Jon noted that they have seen permits that will impact the River. There are laws from Shoreline Protection that state how close to a river activity that could impact the river may occur. The Commissioners will forward the information to Kristie LaPlante. The Commissioners discussed that the regulations should be provided to individuals when they receive an application. It was suggested by the Commissioners that the intent to cut form should have a place on it that requires a signature stating the regulations were provided to the applicant.

a. 2019 Calendar

. Earth Day falls on April 22, 2019 which is during school vacation. Tom James made a motion to set a tentative date of May 4, 2019 for the Town Earth Day event. Joe MacGregor seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Joe MacGregor made a motion to adjourn. Jon Manley seconded the motion. As there was no other business at hand, the meeting was adjourned at 8:39 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by
Karen Belcher
Conservation Commissioner Recording Secretary