

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING
December 11, 2019

PRESENT: Bob Boynton, Chairman, David McTigue, Vice-Chair, Jack Messe, Matt Oliveira, Kleta Dudley (SoRLAC Rep), Bert Hamill (Selectmen's Liaison) Lori Rautiola, Secretary
ABSENT: Michael Bara, Karen Miller

The meeting was called to order at the Town Office on December 11, 2019 at 7:30 p.m.

Kleta made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Jack seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Committee Reports:

The Commission discussed the use of drones within the municipality. Bob stated a drone would be useful to the Commission when an intent to cut or a wetland permit application is filed so the Commission could check the property for wetlands. Bert stated it would be useful to the Planning Board as well when inspecting gravel pits. Bob stated gravel pits are not in the purview of the Commission. Bob mentioned he recently inquired with a Town employee about the purchase of a drone and the employee questioned whether or not it was a privacy issue. Bob noted according to the FAA it is not and he continued stating in his personal opinion it was not a privacy issue and the use of drones is inevitable. Bob recommended the Town establish a connection with a local drone pilot. The discussion continued on drones. Bert stated the Selectmen have charged the Planning Board with multiple projects above and beyond gravel pits, and the PB has been working overtime trying to re-write the regulations. Kleta suggested hiring someone for a year to fly the drone correctly and to determine what the cost would be and Bob agreed.

Lands: Bob mentioned a large property on Binney Hill Road that currently has an approved intent to cut and a Forestry Notification filed with the State. Bob displayed a map of the property on the TV using GIS. There was discussion on the process of how Intents to Cut are filed. Bob stated there are loose connections between the filing of the intent to cut and the Commission. Bert mentioned there is no system or process in place where Boards are "talking to each other". Bob mentioned that is a policy and procedures issue that may need a professional to come in and analyze the situation as it has been an ongoing issue for many years. Bert stated the only pushback on creating some policies and procedures he has noticed has been from the Board of Selectmen.

Bob mentioned there was about 8 acres of wetlands on the Binney Hill property. On the application for this parcel it stated the impact will be less than 3,000 square feet. Bob questioned the amount of square feet that actually gets impacted during the process. He mentioned he spoke with the State regarding the process of the Intents to Cut and Forestry Notifications and how the Commission does not get a chance to review the property before any wetland permits or intents to cut are approved. The State told him that anyone can make a complaint at any time. Bob mentioned the Commission is unaware of anything until the permit is approved by the Assessors. Lori will collaborate with Debbie in the Assessor's office to change the process of filing the intents to cut so the Commission can be notified prior to the application being issued.

There was discussion on building and driveway permits. Bob stated a “desk Check” needs to be done prior to any permits being issued so that the Commission and other Boards can have time to review the proposed building site.

The Commission discussed the responsibilities for monitoring. Bob will send Lori the updated spreadsheet. The discussion moved to land protection.

Bob stated there are a number of things to look for when looking at land for potential protection. Checking to see if the land is owned by the Town, linkage, etc. The Commission discussed potential properties for land protection. Bob mentioned there should be something put forth in the Zoning Ordinance regarding the protection of view sheds. The Commission discussed steep slopes and whether or not they are worth protecting. Matt stated the Commission does not need to protect the steep slopes as of right now because the Zoning Ordinance already does.

Bob mentioned he and David both felt the Conant Hill property would be a good candidate for land protection. Bob stated the parcel has a 360 degree view from the top of the hill. Matt agreed, adding the parcel by Tophet Swamp is also a good candidate and has linkage. Bob would like to get a list from the Town Clerk showing tax liens and see if any of those parcels would be good candidates. Bert cautioned Bob on going public with that information and Bob stated he would enter into nonpublic session if necessary.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Rautiola