

Conservation Commission Draft Minutes	March 12, 2024
Town of Hampton Falls	Town Hall

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING DRAFT MINUTES

A. CALL TO ORDER

- a.** Ms. Hill, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:35pm

B. ROLL CALL

- a. Present:** Mary Ann Hill, Chair, Shawn Hanson, Ann Reis, Robert Wiener, Cathy Golas, Paul Melanson Karen Ayers, alternate (not a voting member)
- b. Absent:** Lou Gargiulo, Selectman's Rep
- c. Staff:** Brianna O'Brien

C. NEW BUSINESS

- a.** Sara McNamara-Gagnon and Rayann Dione discussed conservation and open space strategies
 - i. Ms. McNamara-Gagnon showed the map she put together of conservation land in Hampton Falls which illustrates the different types of conservation land (easements, fee ownership, deed restrictions, set aside land). She asked how the Commission has prioritized and obtained land in the past.
 - ii. The Commission explained that several were targeted: Tonry, Applecrest, Marsh Lane, Raspberry Farm, and Hurd Farm, but that they have also obtained land opportunistically as property owners have expressed interest in conservation, like the Clay Brook Forest. Tax takings have also become conservation land.
 - iii. The preference of the Town would be that conserved land is publicly accessible so folks can use the area for recreation. There is also a benefit to not being the owner or the easement holder because that takes the management and maintenance responsibility off of the Town.
 - iv. The Commission discussed fund availability and match opportunities. The Commission does not have large funds available right now, and the match opportunities are very competitive now.
 - v. Commission priorities for conservation land would include connectivity, size, willingness of the landowner to work with the Town, habitat, water resource areas, threat of development, and salt marsh properties in general.
 - vi. Ms. Hill mentioned the parcel at the corner of Brown Rd and Old Stage Rd. It was part of Applecrest originally but taken out of the land that was encumbered by the easement. It was an approved lot for a subdivision but they have not yet gone through with that. This land connects to other conservation land and is something that the Conservation Commission was interested in.
 - vii. Ms. McNamara-Gagnon reviewed the conservation land prioritization checklist that the Commission used to use to review potential conservation land.
 - viii. The Commission discussed making a larger map and reviewing land that was previously pursued for conservation. They also discussed making new layers that highlight potential conservation land based on the Commission's priorities, like all land in current use over 10 acres or all land contiguous to other conservation land.

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- ix. Ms. McNamara-Gagnon also reviewed the land conservation strategy (LCS). An LCS is a framework to strengthen existing and create new conservation efforts at a local, state or regional level through land acquisition, conservation easements, and land use planning to conserve unique and important habitats. This can be achieved through focusing on function/concept or geographic location. Previously, the Commission has been primarily focused on function. Geographic location has been important primarily in terms of continuity of conservation land.
- x. Ms. Ayers commented that she believed money is better spent conserving developable land as opposed to land that is wet or otherwise undevelopable.
- b.** Ms. McNamara-Gagnon discussed the 2024 PREPA Grant which could fund a number of different small projects. Ms. McNamara-Gagnon highlighted the opportunity to pursue a Natural Resources Inventory (NRI), which Hampton Falls does not have
 - i. The Commission discussed if they had done an NRI before but they agreed that it would need to be updated.
 - ii. The process of applying for the grant was explained. A contractor would need to be hired prior to the grant application so Ms. McNamara-Gagnon would put together an RFP so the Commission could select a consultant and then Ms. McNamara-Gagnon could apply for the grant. This grant requires 15% of the budget to go towards outreach so that would need to be included in the scope.
 - iii. Ms. O'Brien discussed with the Commission how Hampton applied for and received this grant for an NRI last year. They also discussed Hampton Falls procedures for putting out an RFP and applying for a grant.
 - iv. Mr. Hanson moved for Ms. McNamara-Gagnon to draft the RFP to hire a consultant for a Natural Resources Inventory for the Commission to review and to draft the PREPA Grant Application. Ms. Reis seconded. All in favor.
- c.** Ms. Ayers discussed the vernal pool talk and vernal pool field trip and asked for Ms. McNamara-Gagnon's availability. The talk is April 24th 6:30-8pm. They decided that Saturday April 27th 10-12 is best for the field trip.
 - i. They discussed where they could go and mentioned Raspberry Farm, on 88 in Applecrest in the corn maze and several private properties.
 - ii. Mr. Hanson and Ms. Ayers are going to visit a couple of the vernal pools that were discussed last week at 8am Saturday morning.
 - iii. They discussed materials to have for the talk and field trip.
 - iv. Ms. McNamara-Gagnon mentioned that she would invite her friend to the field trip who is very knowledgeable about amphibians and he could bring his net and show the group the kinds of things that live in vernal pools
 - v. Ms. Ayers organized getting snacks and drinks for the library talk. She also mentioned getting the details organized for the Earth Day roadside clean up which was announced in the library's newsletter.
- d.** Ms. McNamara-Gagnon reviewed 5 town-owned parcels with restrictions and asked about missing deeds and if the parcels had been monitored before.

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- i. The Commission discussed which parcels had restrictions, one of the five is owned by the volunteer firefighters so it is not within the Commission's purview, but they agreed that Town-owned land has never been previously monitored.
- ii. RCCD is contracted to monitor 5-8 parcels for each of the towns so they can likely take on the 4 parcels that are owned and managed by Hampton Falls and can potentially do baseline assessment reports for them, or monumentation, and/or establish a procedure for future monitoring .
- e. Ms. Dionne announced that SHEA has gotten a congressionally directed spending request approved that includes money to continue Ms. McNamara-Gagnon's position for at least another three years. It covers a number of different projects but the total amount is \$1.4 million.

D. OLD BUSINESS

- a. In reference to the proposed project at Seacoast Powersports, Ms. Golas asked if people understand why the rules and regulations related to setbacks and wetland protections are in place.
 - i. It was discussed that there are resources publicly available but people will always propose projects and try to get things approved.
- b. Greenhead traps
 - i. Mr. Gandt has sent a letter that he wishes to be reconsidered for the fly trap bid.
 - ii. The bid has been awarded to Dragon, it cannot be rescinded, but Mr. Gandt can come to a Commission meeting to be heard.
 - iii. The container has arrived and the Commission needs to move the traps into the container. They need to coordinate. Mr. Hanson and Ms. Ayers can go to the container and move the traps after looking at the vernal pools Saturday morning.
- c. RCCD donating saltmarsh parcels- status
 - i. PA-84 Documents submitted to DRA
- d. Plaque for Glenn
 - i. The Commission discussed the logistics of how they would pay. Ms. Golas is waiting to hear what is needed for a deposit. It is \$460 for a 10x12" plaque.
- e. CC sign – two types
 - i. Discussion of types of signs to order. The Commission would like a custom aluminum sign for sustainability, durability and visibility. Ms. O'Brien will get several quotes and bring the prices to the Commission next month. They would like to also get a runner in the meantime.
 - ii. Mr. Hanson moved to spend \$100 to order the custom logo runner. Mr. Wiener seconded. All in favor.
- f. The Commission discussed picking up their seedlings in May.

E. COMMUNICATION TO BOARD MEMBERS

- a. ZBA – There are three applications coming up.
 - i. There is a rehearing for 3 Weare Rd. that has been continued to March 28th.

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- ii. 12 Lafayette Rd. is coming back to the ZBA with a new plan, also to be heard on March 28th.
- iii. Someone wants to move their heavy equipment business to the Lamp Shop on Route 1 by the marsh. This will also be before the ZBA but is not on the March 28th agenda.
- b.** Planning Board – There are no applications before the Planning Board right now
- c.** SHEA- They are hosting a flood preparedness meeting at the Hampton Seashell on March 13th at 6:30pm
- d.** Turtles- Ms. Hill has attended a number of interesting webinars on turtles, turtle mating time is end of March, beginning of April so the signs should be put out. The signs are at the Town Hall, Russ will put them out. The list of where they will go is in the meeting minutes from last year. Ms. O'Brien will send the list to Ms. Hill.
- e.** Ms. Hill shared a resource about how to keep woodpeckers off of houses.

F. FINANCIAL

- a.** Fund Bal: \$159,729.38
 - i. Interest was: \$518.12
 - ii. Paid: \$4,015 for the container.
- b.** Budget Balance: \$14,700 or \$11,900 depending on March election
 - i. The only expense has been \$405.75 to pay Ms. O'Brien

G. MINUTES

- a.** Review minutes from November 12, 2023, December 12, 2023, February 13, 2024
 - i. Mr. Hanson moved to accept the November 2023 as amended, December 2023 as written, and February 2024 as written. Mr. Wiener seconded. All in favor.