

MINUTES OF MEETING
CONWAY CONSERVATION COMMISSION
August 14, 2013

The August meeting of the Conway Conservation Commission convened at 6:35 p.m. at the Whitaker Homesite in North Conway, NH. Members present were: Rob Adair, Larry Huemmler and Linda Kearney.

Also joining the meeting were representatives of The Nature Conservancy, Mark Zankel, Director; Jeff Lougee, and Wink Lees.

There being no quorum present, the Chairman declared no action could be taken; however, he invited the representatives of The Nature Conservancy to give their report to those present.

Mr. Zankel stated they were there to give an update on regional expansion efforts and to ask the Conservation Commission for its support for the project. Maps were presented depicting the southern portion of the Green Hills Preserve and property belonging to four landowners they are presently dealing with: Sut and Margaret Marshall, Sut Marshall and Glenn Saunders, John Schiavi, NH Audubon Society (formerly known as the Dahl property).

Mr. Zankel explained their vision is to protect all four of those properties and turn them into conservation land. They have an agreement with the Marshals for the back piece (1000+ acres) contiguous to the Green Hills Preserve, containing a large deer wintering area and wetlands, as well as a nice Black Gum swamp, which he noted is "pretty rare." Areas partly on the former Dahl property have pitch pine population. The map showed the new enhanced recreational access (southern access to the preserve), with existing snowmobile trail – the plan is to protect and continue access for the snowmobile club. He said it is a nice area also for biking and hiking.

Mr. Zankel said the agreement with the Marshall's is to purchase by October 2014, giving time to raise the funds and close. Mr. Adair questioned whether there are any significant fees involved in transfer of the Dahl property. Mr. Zankel stated NH Audubon would sell it to TNC for minimal as they would like it to be protected. He said the first order of business is to raise the funds and ensure the protection of the property. TNC is planning to announce it publicly in the next month or two and will be doing a lot of fund raising.

Mr. Zankel invited questions. Mr. Adair said he thinks it is a great project and he is personally very much in favor of it and he would like to see the town be a positive supporter of this. Mr. Zankel said he understands the Conservation Commission is looking at property on West Side Road also so did not feel it appropriate to ask for financial help, but that a letter of support would be helpful, making a statement that not only TNC, but the town Conservation Commission is in support of it as well. Ms. Kearney and Mr. Huemmler concurred; however, lacking a quorum, no vote could be taken. It was noted the next meeting is Sept. 11th and Mr. Adair offered to put it out to a vote through email to the other members for ratification at the Sept. meeting. Mr. Zankel said if the Commission is able to

do something early to mid Sept. that would be great. Mr. Adair said he will get it out this week, and a letter to TNC as soon as possible.

Mr. Zankel said TNC's mission is to conserve nature and management of this will be what's best for wildlife habitat – if active management is best, that's what they will do, if some is best left alone, they will do that as well. He stated Fish & Game plans to participate, TNC works a lot with Fish & Game and have met with them. They sent their biologist to take a look at it – they are thinking about where the brook trout are going to survive; they have agreed to make some funds available. Their role is to provide technical advice. They will hold a conservation easement as they want to make sure that the property does not get closed down to, for example, hunting - they want to make sure we do not do anything that undermines why they support the project. It was noted also that Tin Mountain has done some brook trout habitat restoration.

The TNC representatives left the meeting at 6:55 p.m.

Mr. Adair submitted the following notes for the record in preparation for the Sept. meeting:

New Hampshire Electric Coop. will be trimming power lines at Whitaker Woods between the railroad tracks and Kearsarge Road starting very soon. FYI: they are not planning to use any herbicides.

Regarding Whitaker Woods events, the Red Jersey Cyclery mountain bike summer series is done for the summer. Mr. Adair noted he had one complaint from Jamie Gemmeti who said he supported the event, but was offended that the ropes were left on the trees adjacent to trail intersections. The event organizers had asked Mr. Adair if this would be acceptable to facilitate setting up and taking down the course each week. The ropes have since been taken down.

It was reported that Don Johnson did some work in Shedd Woods repairing the fence and did some mowing, then went to the Abenaki site and did some brush cutting. They are working on a forest management plan for the East Conway Common Lands; they have not made any progress on the stream crossing to access Hurricane Mt. Common Lands.

Mr. Adair reported USVLT is discussing with the Lucy family an easement on five properties. He noted everyone who responded to an email inquiry was in favor of it and he had hoped to ratify the vote at this meeting; however, he has written a letter of support to allow USVLT to meet a grant deadline. Ratification will be on the agenda for the Sept. meeting.

The meeting ended at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gail T. Currier, Recording Secretary