

TOWN OF DURHAM
Conservation Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, July 14, 2009

Casey Cordes at the Durham Public Library called the meeting to order at 7:28 PM.

Members Present: Ralph Chase, Casey Cordes, Joe Dattilo, Rick Huntley, Bill LaFlamme, Bob Melvin

Call to Order/Roll Call: Members present introduced themselves to the audience in attendance.

Approval of Minutes from June Regular Meeting: Ralph Chase, seconded by Bill LaFlamme to approve the June 9, 2009 minutes as distributed, made a motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Amendments to Agenda / Approval of July Agenda: Ralph Chase, seconded by Joe Dattilo to approve the agenda as distributed, made a motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Session: None

White's Farm Presentations & Community Forum: There were approximately 60 members of the community present. Seth Lerman from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) reviewed his findings from the Allyn Brook Erosion and Sedimentation report from July 2007. Allyn Brook is a flat gradient stream so there is not a lot of steepness and it will flow more slowly and sediment will move more slowly. One of the jobs of a stream is to move sediment. In addition, soils in the area are a more erodible soil. There is a variety of things going on in the watershed changing the way the brook functions. One is development, which increases the amount of impervious surface so the water runs off quicker. Seth opened the floor for questions and comments. There were many comments about removing the sediment and debris in the brook and is it something that should be done. Seth commented that is a possible course of action; however, there are consequences with changing the flows elsewhere in the brook. It is also a course of action that would have to be maintained, because the brook would continue to fill in with sediment. There were many comments about how the brook was in the 1970's when it was maintained. It was deeper, had fish and other wildlife. The fields that used to be hayed regularly are now are too wet most of the season. Seth commented that the Town should determine what uses of the property would be because that will aid in determining what actions to take. There are a couple of options to just removing the sediment. One is a natural stream design where you hire someone to redesign the stream so that it maintains its natural condition, still flows, offers pools and ripples. Another option is to have the brook channelized with trap rock. There were comments about the lack of access to the brook due to overgrown vegetation and the amount of vegetation growing in the skating pond. Laura Francis asked if the current condition of the area could affect the water quality in the future. Seth stated that taking care of water quality upstream may be a more appropriate approach and that the flooding of the area may have little impact on water quality. There is flooding of the area from both the Coginchaug River and Allyn Brook. Seth reiterated that the community and the Town needed to decide the land use and maintenance of White's Farm. The NRCS is a technical service provider that can provide assistance for a follow-up assessment of the area. Options range from doing nothing to a natural stream design. Seth left the meeting at 8:15 PM. Discussion and comments continued with those present.

Sue White shared pictures of the area and read a statement about the lack of management and maintenance of the property. Francis Willett, Director of Emergency Management, has concerns around the roadways and the properties that are being encroached by the additional flooding. If Route 68, 17 and 77 get washed out due to flooding, how will residents get to work? Georgica Kearney read a letter from Lillian White expressing her reflections of White Farm property then and now. She described how the area looked in 1938 through July 2009, from beautiful farmland to a

swamp. Tina Gossner request that when looking at choices for what to do, consider the natural stream option. Kurt Bober asked if there would be more meetings like this one and to have more expert opinions presented. Georgica Kearney asked why the area is no longer mowed to the edge of the brook and why the berm was constructed at the skating pond. Casey Cordes replied that the mowing change was made based upon Seth's report to help deter bank erosion. Simone Howe, Skating Pond Committee, explained the berm was built to expand the surface area of the skating pond. Hannah Gossner commented on the number of dead trees on the edge of the brook. A question was raised whether DEP has been contacted for help with what to do about the condition of the brook. Casey Cordes replied that DEP has not been contacted. Rick Huntley stated that DEP does not have the level of outreach and professional help to provide design services. The White Farm property has not had a review done by the Environmental Review Team (ERT), but is in the queue to be done in the future. Laura Francis stated that both NRCS and the Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District are assisting the Town with the Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP) that is required because of violations at the Transfer Station. The Coginchaug River Basin Committee found that there are bacteria in that watershed area and one of the plans to mitigate that is to set up a pet waste program. Sue White stated there is a constant flow out into the cornfield where the brook has lost its banks and that is a new situation just this spring. Can this situation be corrected now? There was a question about why there is a hose from the pump house pumping water out for extended periods of time. Bill Milardo, Durham Health Department, explained the water being pumped out is part of the sampling procedure that is required by the State. It samples for micro particulates or invertebrates that can get into the water supply. The sampling will be done for one more quarter. John Corona agreed that the water issue is important, but there are other issues to consider. There is no control of access to the property since posted signage is not followed. He would like to see the usage of the property limited to passive recreation and have the Commission consider an active role in controlling access to the property. A dog person commented that there used to be dog coursing and field trial events on the property that no longer take place because the activity was not well received. Bob Melvin commented on the flooding, most of the flooding comes from the Coginchaug River rather than Allyn Brook. The area is a flood prone area as shown on maps dating back to the 1970's.

Casey Cordes thanked everyone for coming out this evening. The Commission will continue to gather information and will share it in future forums like this one. Laura Francis pledged the support of the Board of Selectmen and Town staff to help the Commission with this issue.

Request to Use White's Farm – Perry Sandoval, 4-H Fair: Nathan Sandoval, President of New Haven and Middlesex 4-H Fair Association, was present to make a request to use White's Farm for overflow parking. Ralph Chase, seconded by Joe Dattilo to approve the request to use White's Farm for overflow parking during the 4-H Fair, August 7-9, 2009, made a motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Site Development Plan Review: None

Open Space Issues Reports/Updates: Curtis Woodlands; Pent Road; Howd Road; Creampot Valley; White's Farm: Joe Dattilo requested that the Commission revisit the property that was being offered to the Town in lieu of \$5,500 in back taxes. The property is owned by a defunct not for profit association, Community Development Services. Joe stated that it would cost the Town \$5,000 to \$10,000 to seize the property. Joe will check with Laura Francis to see what the Town would like to do. Casey checked with Sheehan Michael on his Eagle Scout Project work at Curtis Woodlands. The field has been half mowed, the brush pile has not been burned by the fire department because it was too wet, and there are quarter more Russian Olive trees to remove. Once the Russian Olive trees are removed, the field could be brush hogged. Mark Smalley has requested to be a steward for Curtis Woodlands. There was a complaint about flies on Pent Road that has been attributed to manure piles. Bill Milardo is going to look into it. Kurt Bober reported that the uprights for the gate on Cream Pot Road have been installed. He said that rocks could be placed to deter going around the gate. The double gate for Howd Road has arrived.

Tenant Updates for Howd Road and Pent Road Open Space: Melynda Naples is reviewing the lease extension agreement.

Open forum with Property Stewards – Whites Farm – Jack Stahl; Pent Road (Deerfield Farm) – Melynda Naples; Howd Road – Matt Reed; Pisgah Mountain - Andy Golschneider with Venture Crew 169; Jim Smigal

with BSA Troop 27 and Christina Costas; Creampot Valley – George & Irene Roberts; Curtis Woodlands – Rob Williams; Portion of Wimler Property with Public Access – Dick Porter; and Sawmill Road – Ray Koba:
No reports.

Payment of Bills: Ralph Chase, seconded by Bill LaFlamme to approve the payment of bills as presented: \$1232.50 to Northford Enterprises for dozer and excavator work on White's Farm roads,; \$3500.00 to Boudreau Welding for double gate for Howd Road; \$240.00 to New England Sign Carvers for repair of Curtis Woodlands sign; \$27.89 to Alpha Graphics for copying materials for White's Farm Forum; and \$22.50 to Pam Huntley for secretarial services, made a motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Chair's Report – *New Business* – Budget & Accounts Update; Markers for Memorial Tree Plantings; 2009/2010 Hunting Lottery Applications & Cards; *Old Business* - Tree Warden's ATB Tree Planting Grant; *Correspondence* – Update of a Contact List for Committee Members: Casey looked into accounts and there is a reserve account with a \$19,000. The tree planting account remains at Citizen's Bank. Casey needs to get access to the account. The budget for 2010 is \$6,600. Bill LaFlamme reported on memorial markers for the memorial plantings. Footstones range in price from \$100-\$600. Another option is to have a plaque mounted on a large rock. Bill will continue to get more information. There is a workday scheduled for July 18, 2009 from 9 AM to Noon. Work will be concentrated in the nursery area.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 10:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Pam Huntley
Recording Secretary