

Hollis Conservation Commission
Minutes of February 21, 2024 Meeting
Approved as Amended March 6, 2024

Regular Members Present: Joe Connelly, Paul Edmunds, Mark Post, Thomas Davies, Karen Bridgeo, Peter Band;
Alternate Members Present: Bernadette McQuilkin, Paul Armstrong, Kate Rydstrom.
Board of Selectmen Liaison: Tom Whalen
Staff: Connie Cain
Guests: Bill Moseley, Planning Board Chair
Audience: David Petry, Joe Garruba, Julie Rowland, Winnie Crouse, among others

Meeting was called to order at 6:32 pm.

P. Armstrong was appointed to vote in the absence of Tom Dufresne.

J. Connelly shared that K. Rydstrom was appointed as an Alternate Member. Another town member has submitted his resume and reached out to Town Hall about the possibility of becoming an alternate member as well.

Both J. Connelly and P. Edmunds will be absent for the March 6, 2024 meeting. M. Post will chair that meeting. J. Connelly noted that they would not be having the March 20, 2024 meeting because the Town Meeting is March 16, 2024.

COMMITTEE AND BOARD REPORTS

Planning Board Update - B. Moseley

B. Moseley shared that at the last meeting, they were primarily focused on the Proctor Hill Development. The Wildlife expert was supposed to present at the last meeting, but was unable to attend. As a result, the Planning Board (PB) came up with a list of questions and points that he would need to address at the next meeting. They would like him to address the layout of the development as it relates to the optimal relationship to the wildlife, the exact timeframe of his observation of the property, a wetlands report, more details on specific species and wildlife habitats in general. The PB would also like him to address the type of culvert that would be in use to optimize wildlife crossing, further wildlife movement patterns, the logging situation as it related to wildlife inventory, along with their plans for recommendations on how to manage the wildlife along with what procedures would be put in place. They further asked for more details on the surrounding impacts and the wetland buffers. There were 22 items they brought up that would need to be addressed that will be laid out in the meeting minutes. The developers should be coming to the next planning meeting with traffic impact studies, along with a further wetland report and wildlife impact study.

K. Bridgeo asked at what stage the storm water drainage plan would be addressed; B. Moseley replied that they would address that at the design stage.

M. Post asked if the PB had conversed about the viewscape, particularly the 3 lots furthest to the left; B. Moseley replied that they would address that at the design stage.

Board of Selectmen Update - T. Whalen

T. Whalen shared that the Board of Selectmen (BOS) had welcomed K. Rydstrom as the new Alternate Member of the HCC, and thanked her for her willingness to serve. He also noted the resident request for clean-up supplies. The BOS had approved up to \$150 for those supplies.

NEW CONTINUING BUSINESS

CD Rollover - J. Connelly

J. Connelly mentioned that Jacob Fitzgerald reached out to him about the automatic rollover for the 30-day CD.

P. Band motioned to continue to rollover the 30-Day CD at maturity until such time that the funds are needed; seconded by P. Edmunds. All in favor, none opposed or abstained, and the motion was approved by a vote of 7-0-0.

Reimbursement to Roadside Clean-up Group - J. Connelly

J. Connelly reminded the board that there was a group of individuals volunteering to do roadside clean-up and had reached out to C. Cain about possible reimbursement for standard supplies in the amount \$150.00.

P. Edmunds motioned to reimburse up to \$200 upon receipt from the group as requested; seconded by P. Band. All in favor, none opposed or abstained, and the motion was approved by a vote of 7-0-0.

Law Property Request - J. Connelly

Reggie Ouellette reached out to the HCC and asked if he could continue dog training on the Law property as he has done for years. A brief discussion took place on the questions they would like to ask him about his training, etc. J. Connelly shared that he would send out the email to everyone. P. Armstrong volunteered to reach out to R. Ouellette to ask him the greater scope.

Proctor Hill Proposed Subdivision - HCC Member Discussion - No Public Comment - J. Connelly

J. Connelly stated the following: "There will be no public comment tonight. The public will have the opportunity to address the HCC in this room at a future HCC meeting, but the developer is still producing studies that could change HCC opinions, for example the storm-water management plan. HCC receives emails, letters, and phone calls from the public and we reflect on each of these inputs, but let me be clear in that it is false to suggest that the public isn't given the opportunity to influence this Commission. Tonight, the HCC will discuss our thoughts and then send a letter to the Planning Board with questions, comments, and recommendations. They know our input is coming."

(J. Garruba left the meeting at approximately 7:00 pm)

J. Connelly shared that he has written a letter regarding this property addressing some of his concerns, that he will email to the board to get their input. He expanded on the themes in this letter, among which were, the wetland crossing, the open space, the Wildlife Assessment, and animal species. In particular, J. Connelly stated that he wants the applicant to have a clause written in the agreement that states that the open space will remain open without roadways, or future alternation. He also noted that he agreed with the wildlife assessment recommendation for an oversized box culvert. He further explained that in the wildlife assessment there were multiple mentions of the vernal pool's existence being "inconclusive", which left the decision up to the HCC. He urged the HCC to decide that the vernal pools do exist, which would change the rules that the developer would have to follow. He pointed out that there needs to be a strong storm water management plan, that makes sure there is no pollution of fertilizer or other products used on the lots into Beaver Brook. J. Connelly agreed with wildlife assessment's recommendation to plant trees on certain lots to make sure the view-scape from Beaver Brook is not obstructed. He concluded that until the storm water management plan was brought before the HCC, he would not be comfortable making any recommendations or final decisions.

T. Davies commented that he would be interested in speaking with the residents of Deacon Lane to get their perspective.

T. Whalen commented that because many committees in town are involved in this, that it would be important that the HCC knows its role so it can be effective and clear.

B. McQuilkin shared that she had noticed a marked decrease in wildlife activity once a new development had gone in near where she is located on Rocky Pond Road in 2019. She would like to get another opinion on development, as there are some red flags in the wildlife assessment, particularly with the vernal pool assessment. She further explained her concerns for the surrounding wildlife, water supply, and overall density of the development.

K. Bridgeo commented about the turtles and their habits as they will traverse up towards the uplands, which would place them around the location of the proposed development. She also noted that the vernal pool discussion was not backed up by data in the wildlife assessment. She also pointed out that some of the lots were 500ft from the shoreline of the wildlife pond, which would affect the wildlife and remove some of the protection of Beaver Brook. She noted that a peer review of the study would be very helpful.

K. Rydstrom agreed that a peer review study would be important. She noted that it might be most effective to target certain lots of the overall property that would help the wildlife best, perhaps even having the town purchase back some of the lots that would be the most effected.

P. Armstrong shared that he felt the wildlife assessment was not detailed enough, and that our job is not to negotiate with the developers, rather to conserve and protect what we are supposed to.

P. Edmunds noted his agreement with the comments. He expanded on his concerns with the credentials of the author of the wildlife study and making sure that the developers comply with the laws regarding conserving wildlife etc. He further concluded that he would like to see a peer review study and that he would like to see a mitigation on the impact of the houses proximate to proctor hill and the houses overlooking the wildlife pond. He shared that this same developer had had issues with water and well usage on other developments in the past, which would be a good thing to keep in mind regarding this project.

M. Post shared that he felt the wildlife study was not extensive enough, and that the credentials of the expert studying the wildlife and land ought to be verified. He echoed the common sentiment that a peer review study would be welcomed, or

having indifferent expert come out to do a further study on the land. He noted that one of the points in the charter of the HCC is to protect the views capes of Hollis, as a result a further study or example of what the view scape would look like would be important in moving forward. He also commented that certain lots might need to have more elaborate wildlife studies, or be considered for removal.

P. Band agreed with the previous comments and explained his concerns with needing to proceed slowly and with caution.

P. Armstrong asked if Jim Oehler could review the wildlife study.

B. McQuilkin commented that getting a peer review study for the road study, that might be a good idea.

Discussion took place on the wildlife biologists, a list of preferred consultants, and payment of those consultants. B. McQuilkin pointed out that the list of approved consultants is outdated and that maybe the HCC can help put together a new list.

J. Connelly noted that public comment would be available on the April 3, 2024 HCC meeting.

K. Bridgeo commented on several of the lots with details regarding the height, slope, and proximity of the Beaver Brook. She also noted that 153 species of birds were noted to be at the wildlife pond.

2024 Roadside Clean-up Planning - J. Connelly

J. Connelly shared that it would be on May 4, 2024, that they will start at 8:00 am, and ask for 1-2 volunteers per time slot. The DPW knows about the event and has agreed to pick up any conspicuous trash bags left behind on the roadside Monday, May, 6, 2024.

P. Edmonds volunteered to talk to Morin's Landscaping to do Depot Rd.

T. Whalen noted that if they give the list of what roads were done to the DPW, they will pick up bags in those areas.

Moose Plate Grant Ideas - J. Connelly

P. Armstrong commented that he will be putting up the sign shortly on the Siergiewicz property.

J. Connelly noted that the Moose Plate Grant had been highly successful in the past, and that they should apply again. This time, the grant would be for invasives, particularly the Japanese Knott Weed throughout town. He shared that they are waiting for a quote from Full Circle Forestry, and that Kerry Rickrode is helping them with the grant process.

Positively Hollis Ideas - J. Connelly

J. Connelly shared that he thought an article in the Positively Hollis website would be a good idea. Brief discussion took place on working with both Positively Hollis and the Hollis-Brookline Rotary News Website to share some education on what the HCC does. T. Whalen volunteered to write an article for the HCC.

PUBLIC MINUTES

J. Connelly noted that on Line 80, the sentence reads "C. Brannon replied that you could not." J. Connelly suggested adding "alter or change open space." for clarification. Members agreed.

J. Connelly motioned to accept the public minutes, with the amendment to Line 80 as discussed; seconded by M. Post. Voting in favor were Joe Connelly, Paul Edmunds, Mark Post, Thomas Davies, and Karen Bridgeo; none opposed, with P. Band and P. Armstrong abstaining, and the minutes were approved by a vote of 5-0-2.

Non-Public minutes will be approved after non-public session due to a potential change to the minutes.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION

P. Armstrong motioned to enter into non-public session; seconded by M. Post. Members were polled, voting in favor of entering into Non-Public Session were J. Connelly, P. Edmunds, T. Davies, M. Post, K. Bridgeo, P. Band and P. Armstrong, no members opposed or abstaining. The motion carried by a vote of 7-0-0 and the HCC entered into Non-Public Session at 8:23 pm.

RETURN TO PUBLIC SESSION

T. Davies motioned to conclude the Non-Public session and to keep the minutes sealed until voted by the HCC to release, seconded by J. Connelly. Members were polled, voting in favor of concluding the Non-Public Session were J. Connelly, P. Edmunds, T. Davies, M. Post, K. Bridgeo, P. Band and P. Armstrong, no members opposed or abstaining. The motion carried by a vote of 7-0-0 and the HCC concluded Non-Public Session at 8:55 pm.

183 **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

184 A Staff Note will be added at the end of Line 46 for clarification on the item being discussed.

185 *J. Connelly motioned to accept the non-public meeting minutes of February 7, 2024 as amended, and to keep the*
186 *non-public minutes sealed until voted by the HCC to release, as written; seconded by M. Post. Voting in favor were*
187 *Joe Connelly, Paul Edmunds, Mark Post, Thomas Davies, and Karen Bridgeo; none opposed, with P. Band and P.*
188 *Armstrong abstaining, and the minutes were approved by a vote of 5-0-2.*

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190 **ADJOURNMENT**

191 *J. Connelly motioned to adjourn the meeting; seconded by M. Post. All in favor; none opposed or abstained. Motion*
192 *carried 7-0-0, and the meeting adjourned at 8:56 pm.*

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194 Respectfully Submitted,

195 Amice Le Doux

196 Recording Secretary