

**Hollis Conservation Commission ACEP-ALE Subcommittee Meeting
Public Minutes of the December 14, 2023 Meeting
Approved February 15, 2024**

Members present: Mark Post, Peter Band, Cheryl Quaine, Bernadette McQuilkin

P. Band called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

OVERVIEW OF TASKS/MISSION STATEMENT

P. Band stated that this is the first meeting of the subcommittee of the Hollis Conservation Commission, with a purpose to conserve farmland, and he introduced committee members. He further explained that this committee is a subcommittee of the Hollis Conservation Commission (HCC) and will explore the opportunity to conserve active farmland with ACEP-ALE federal funds. Tracey Boisvert, USDA and NRCS, will oversee the application and funding.

P. Band outlined the agenda for the meeting as follows: 1.) Overview of Task Discussion 2.) Mission Statement 3.) Next Steps.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION

M. Post made a motion to enter into Non-Public session to discuss specific properties. C. Quaine seconded the motion. Members were polled, members voting in favor of entering into Non-Public Session were M. Post, P. Band, C. Quaine, B. McQuilkin; none opposed. The motion carried by a vote of 4-0-0, and the committee entered Non-Public Session at 6:40 p.m.

RETURN TO PUBLIC SESSION

M. Post motioned to conclude the Non-Public session and to keep the minutes sealed until voted by the HCC to release, seconded by C. Quaine. Members were polled, voting in favor of concluding the Non-Public Session were M. Post, C. Quaine, P. Band, and B. McQuilkin; none opposed or abstained. The motion carried by a vote of 4-0-0, and the HCC concluded Non-Public Session and returned to public session at 7:05 pm.

NEXT STEPS

P. Band volunteered to bring the first sections of the package to Lori Radke as Town Administrator to ask for assistance. He will also inform the Select Board.

M. Post will notify Tracey Boisvert to look for an application from us starting with the entity approval. He will also touch base with her to make sure we are following the correct procedure. This would include confirming that April 14, 2024 is the final submission date for 2025 funding and that grant funds are approved on a rolling basis.

P. Band reiterated that ACEP is a funding program for easements; land must be used for farming. In many cases, it would most likely be leased out to a farmer, as opposed to being farmed by the owner. There might be trails along the sides of the land for the public. Owner's taxes would probably stay the same.

C. Quaine asked if HCC had any other properties in mind, since money is available. B. McQuilkin indicated she had one in mind that could be discussed in another non-public session.

C. Quaine asked how long to get an appraisal. She suggested we could get this appraisal process started now.

M. Post indicated that some committee members must speak with the property owner to ensure they are comfortable with requirements, e.g., sharing tax information. Only one or two committee members might be present to build a relationship with owners.

M. Post will begin to look at the parcel portion of the application and encouraged us all to do the same. This committee needs to determine where to get all the information needed. C. Quaine indicated that she can access NSDA maps. M. Post stated that If there is anything we do not have access to, we have knowledgeable people who can help, such as Trevor Hardy on the Agricultural Commission (Ag Com).

P. Band believes Town staff should pull everything together, but we as a committee can help provide the information. Select Board will have to approve the submittal, so we will need to meet with this Board in a non-public session. The Board will most likely rely on Lori Radke and committee members for submitting the paperwork accurately.

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M. Post stated that getting the appraisal might be non-trivial in that there are specific ways it needs to be done. We should hire an appraiser who has worked with government grants like this before. He can get a name of someone from Ag Com.

C. Quaine asked should we set up a Dropbox where we can keep all the pieces? P. Band will ask if the Town has a Dropbox we could use.

M. Post is optimistic about success with this grant, and these funds are similar to what the Town has been awarded before to acquire land. There are records available from previous transactions in Town, and Tracey Boisvert is there to help us succeed.

The next meeting will be January 11, 2024.

ADJOURNMENT

M. Post made a motion to adjourn, seconded by C. Quaine. All in favor; none opposed or abstained; the motion carried by a vote of 4-0-0, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Bernadette McQuilkin