

HOLLIS CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Minutes of Meeting

April 3, 2024

Approved April 17, 2024

Regular Members Present: Joe Connelly, Paul Edmunds, Mark Post, Thomas Davies, Karen Bridgeo, Peter Band;
Alternate Members Present: Bernadette McQuilkin, James Plummer, Paul Armstrong, Kate Rydstrom.
Board of Selectmen Liaison: Tom Whalen
Staff: Connie Cain
Present: Dave Belanger, Recreation Commission

Meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm.

J. Connelly complemented M. Post on his running of the March 6, 2024 meeting.

MEMBERSHIP

J. Plummer announced that he was officially resigning from the HCC, as he has moved to Salem NH. Members thanked him for his work on the Commission, especially as technical support for the seminars and other items, and wished him well in his future endeavors.

(J. Plummer left the meeting at 6:35 pm.)

With J. Plummer's resignation, this leaves 2 potential Alternate openings. Tony Fowler, who was at the March 6, 2024 meeting, is interested in joining. He has also gotten a volunteer application from William Fahey, who is also interested in joining. J. Connelly will be meeting with him in the near future, and will be inviting him to attend a few meetings before deciding on whether to join or not.

OFFICER ELECTION

After a brief discussion, the current officers were asked if they wanted to continue in their current positions; all agreed.

P. Armstrong motioned to nominate and elect the current officers for another year term; the current officers are Joe Connelly, Chairperson; Paul Edmunds, Vice-Chair; Thomas Davies, Treasurer; and Mark Post, Secretary; seconded by J. Connelly. All members in favor, none opposed or abstained, and the motion carried 6-0-0.

J. Connelly appointed B. McQuilkin to vote in the absence of Tom Dufresne.

PUBLIC COMMENT

J. Connelly opened the public comment portion of the meeting, stating: "The Conservation Commission welcomes public comment for up to 2 minutes per person. The Conservation Commission is not obligated to respond or engage in a discussion. The Conservation Commission will take comments under advisement, and, if appropriate, may set the item for discussion at a future meeting." As there was no one present for Public Comment, J. Connelly closed the public comment portion of the meeting.

RECREATION COMMISSION – Dave Belanger, Chairman

J. Connelly stated that he did not send out the information to the other members on this topic, but D. Belanger wished to approach the HCC about constructing a third soccer field on the Hardy Field in the area to the west of the second field. This will involve some wetlands permits and building an access bridge over the stream. This would be in the area where the "BMX Park" is now. Some discussion of the restrictions on the property, C. Cain will review the Conservation Restriction deed and the HCC minutes prior to the second field construction and inform the HCC.

(D. Belanger left the meeting at 6:50 pm.)

T. Davies noted that the HCC has the reputation of being anti Recreation Commission, which is not true. The HCC has the charge to protect the Town's wetlands, water sources, and wildlife. A brief discussion of Massachusetts laws, fertilizer use on the proposed soccer field. This will be discussed further at a future meeting.

CORRESPONDENCE

J. Connelly noted that he has received the following items:

- 1.) Thank you note from Judy Gross for the road clean-up equipment reimbursement funds. She sent J. Connelly pictures from the group's road cleanups; he will forward to members.

2.) Falconry Event at Woodmont West. The Hollis Social Library is hosting this event on May 11th at noon. Erica Crea, Recreation Coordinator, suggested that the library contact the HCC for permission to use Woodmont West for the event, as their original location was not available. The Agricultural Lease will need to be reviewed for any potential issues.

P. Armstrong asked if there were any problems with the birds on Woodmont West. J. Connelly felt this was a different matter. K. Bridgeo noted that Nichols-Smith Land Trust, of which she is a member, would be concerned with this being an “event;” she felt that they would not want to set precedent by allowing. T. Whalen suggested using the Law property instead; P. Armstrong suggested the Hollis-Brookline High School. J. Connelly will get additional details from the library staff; M. Post will speak to Adrien Lavoie, the Woodmont West lease holder and report back at the next meeting.

3.) Letters from a Hollis Springs/Flea Market subdivision abutter. J. Connelly stated “These letters will not be discussed tonight because they were filled with personal attacks on Town Hall employees, boards, and committees. The letters include derogatory terms and inflammatory words. It is clear these letters are intended to smear, and not to encourage dialog or compromise, or to suggest paths forward on local issues. To repeat what I’ve said before from this seat, the Conservation Commission has great respect for the integrity, talent and commitment of Planning Board members and Town Hall Staff.”

TREASURER’S REPORT

As of April 1, 2024, the regular account has an available balance of \$196,449.38, and the 30-day CD balance of \$705,955.81. This gives a total balance of \$902,405.19, and an available balance of \$892,405.19, less the \$10,000 stewardship reserve. The totals include \$1923.59 interest on the 30-day CD and \$433.28 in other interest earned.

A brief discussion occurred in regards to the stewardship reserve. T. Davies is not aware that it has ever been used; he asked that members think about discontinuing the reserve.

ROADSIDE CLEAN-UP

The date has been established as May 4, 2024, and the HCC booth will be set up at the Hollis Transfer Station on the day. A sign-up sheet has been distributed via email, and most slots are filled. J. Connelly will make a note to invite Judy Gross on next year’s planning prior to the event.

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

Craig Birch will be in attendance at the next HCC meeting on April 17th. There are several items due from him, including the Annual Monitoring Reports, an update on the “junk” car in Parker Pond, as discussed at an earlier meeting, and management plans for the Flint Brook, Ranger-Rideout, Lord and Rich (Tree Farm. CC) properties. He should be able to provide an update on these items.

WATER SIPHONING

P. Armstrong spoke to Fire Chief Rob Boggis in regards to water siphoning by landscapers and others. He was unaware that the he has the ability to allow fire pond use for this; he understood better than P. Armstrong about the reasons to not allow the siphoning. This is one of the items that there is nothing that can be done except to monitor the situation.

K. Bridgeo suggested putting cameras up at the known siphoning sites, a brief discussion ensued about the type and where to place. The discussion continued over the potential fine, as could be established by the Town’s Health Officer. The bottom line is that if residents see landscapers or other companies siphoning water from local streams or water bodies, to call them out and publicly shame them.

BMX PARK

J. Connelly stated that the previous discussion was that as the DPW couldn’t get their equipment in to the area, the HCC had decided that they would go into the area and remove the ramps/jumps. He asked for a “champion” to spearhead the clean-up; B. McQuilkin volunteered if someone were to take over Old Home Day planning; P. Band volunteered to assist her with the clean-up. Discussion of the construction of the ramps and jumps, and effort needed. If the Recreation Commission is building the new soccer field, is it necessary for the HCC to remove it? It was felt necessary, and B. McQuilkin and P. Band will establish a date and report back.

LAW PROPERTY

Reggie Ouellette has requested to use the property for hunting dog training. P. Armstrong has spoken to Mr. Ouellette, and he stated that he brings in younger dogs to follow simple commands, and they are only there for a few days before moving on to another location. He has trained dogs in these field before, there is no shooting, and he is licensed by the State and Fish & game, but not insured. P. Armstrong stated that the HCC is charged with protecting the land and the wetlands, after that, it is a decision of the Selectboard. If there were machinery involved, he would not be in favor, but this doesn’t disturb the property with a dog or two. B. McQuilkin has some concerns over Town property being used for a commercial venture, if he is making money, then there should be a lease. She is also concerned about setting precedent in allowing this type of use, and disturbing

the wildlife habitat on this property, which is sensitive on this property. J. Connelly asked T. Whalen if this should be brought to the Selectboard, P. Armstrong thought a letter should be written to the Selectboard informing them of the HCC's recommendation. K. Bridgeo asked if there a Conservation Easement on the property, and what is the allowed use? B. McQuilkin asked if there was a restriction on commercial ventures. Further discussion on what if allowed or not; setting precedent, insurance, and leasing. This will need to be researched further before reaching a decision.

INVASIVE TREATMENTS

Eric Radlof of Full Circle Forestry submitted a quote for the invasive treatments as requested, and the plan is to pursue a matching grant via Kerry Rickrode of the Hillsborough Co. Conservation District (HCCD). B. McQuilkin reported that the amount in the quote is too small for the grant, it was recommended that between \$10,000 to \$12,000 be the target amount. J. Connelly stated the grants were due in September, and thought that the proposal could be extended to other properties and/or multi-years. B. McQuilkin stated that Hollis has done matching grants in the past such as Moose Plate grants; matching grants from the HCCD could include "work in kind," seminars, etc., and the HCC could count the time spent as part of the match. This would allow for as little money to be spent as possible. The HCC just wrapped up a multi-year grant, so multi-years should be possible.

T. Davies stated that while he is aware that the Japanese knotweed is an issue, he requested that the focus be on bittersweet removal. This invasive is more of an issue, has destroyed many trees and forests; he noted that an area behind the Congregational Church is overrun with bittersweet. If Eric Radlof can address the bittersweet as well, it may be more beneficial. P. Armstrong stated that Eric Radlof can address the bittersweet, and had done an area on Depot Road, but if it's so grown up, he may not be able to handle it. T. Davies agreed, but if it's just beginning, he may be able to remove it.

J. Connelly stated that handling both items may push bid into \$20,000 +. He suggested that members come up with a list of locations and the invasive species, and that next year, the HCC do their best to mitigate. Any quote over \$5000 would have to be put to bid, in accordance with Town regulations.

K. Bridgeo asked if it were possible to create a Google Docs document that everyone could input into. C. Cain will ask if there is a Town policy and report back.

MINUTES

Public Meeting Minutes of March 6, 2024. B. McQuilkin had one minor correction of "colander" to "calendar".

J. Connelly motioned to accept the public meeting minutes of March 6, 2024 as amended; seconded by P. Band. All in favor, none opposed or abstained, and the motion carried 7-0-0.

No changes to the Non-Public Minute of March 6, 2024.

J. Connelly motioned to accept the non-public meeting minutes of March 6, 2024 as written, and to keep the non-public minutes sealed until voted by the HCC to release; seconded by P. Band. All in favor, none opposed or abstained, and the motion carried 7-0-0.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION

T. Davies motioned to enter into non-public session; seconded by K. Bridgeo. Members were polled, voting in favor of entering into Non-Public Session were J. Connelly, P. Edmunds, M. Post, T. Davies, P. Band, K. Bridgeo, and B. McQuilkin, no members opposed or abstaining. The motion carried by a vote of 7-0-0 and the HCC entered into Non-Public Session at 7:47 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, M. Post, T. Davies, P. Band, K. Bridgeo, and B. McQuilkin, no members opposed or abstaining. The motion carried by a vote of 7-0-0 and the HCC concluded Non-Public Session at 7:55 pm.

B. McQuilkin reminded members that the Wild & Scenic River program has grants available in addition to the HCCD.

ADJOURNMENT

J. Connelly motioned to adjourn the meeting; seconded by P. Edmunds. All in favor, none opposed or abstained. Motion carried 7-0-0, and the meeting adjourned at 7:56 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Connie Cain
Staff