

# HOLLIS CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Minutes of Meeting

May 15, 2019

Approved June 5, 2019

Regular Members: Tom Dufresne, Thomas Davies, Jonathan Bruneau,  
Alternate Members: Laura Bianco, Paul Edmunds, Cheryl Quaine  
BOS Ex-Officio: Peter Band  
Guests: Sherry Wyskiel, Jeff Peters, Amos White, Hollis Trails Committee;  
Craig Birch, Hollis Forest Committee;  
Jim Oehler, Management Plan Author  
Samuel "Quincy" Birch, Anna Birch, Sue Ellen Birch, former Birch Hill property owners.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm.

## **BIRCH HILL MANAGEMENT PLAN DISCUSSION**

J. Oehler introduced himself, and stated that he created the plan at the request of the HCC. He is a Certified Wetlands Biologist, a NH Fish & Game officer, and a Hollis resident. The properties, which were purchased by the Town in 2017 from the Hildreth-Birch Family, are collectively known as the "Birch Hill" properties, and contain approximately 345 acres. These parcels also connect to other HCC and/or Town land in the area.

### *FORESTED AREAS*

J. Oehler began his presentation with the forested parts of the property. Many of these areas were harvest by the former owners in the 5 years preceding the sale to the Town. His recommendation is, with 2 exceptions, that the properties be reviewed in about 10 years to determine whether a timber harvest or thinning is needed at that time, with growth being allowed to promote forest growth and wildlife habitat. The two exceptions to this would be Stand #4, which is recommended to become "Young Forest Growth", and Stand #9, which is presently considered a "Wildlife Opening" and should be maintained as such.

J. Oehler discussed the wildlife which could be potentially found on the site, including the Eastern Box Turtle, which recently reappeared near the Amherst boundary with Hollis; and the Eastern Hog-Nosed Snake. Moose have also been seen in the northwestern part of Hollis, and many photos have been published to social media.

### *INVASIVE SPECIES*

As noted in the plan, no invasive species have been found on the property, however, a small amount known to exist on the Cell Tower site, owned by the Birch Family. Wood chips would not be recommended for trail usage as invasive species seeds are known to come in via such material.

### *TRAILS & GATES*

There are approximately 7 miles of trails total. The trail names used in the report were created by J. Oehler to identify them, as he could not find any record of the trail names. Discussion of the trails commenced; S. Wyskiel stated that she did not have issues with the recommendations presented in the management plan.

The Federal Hill Trail, S. Wyskiel thought that this trail may have been created by former or present private property owners abutting the properties near the road. This is not maintained or used by the Trails Committee.

A portion of the Bridge Trail appears to have been abandoned, S. Wyskiel was also able to provide some history, and explained that at the time of the property transfer to the Town, the former Land Study Protection Committee had negotiated with the Hildreth-Birch family that the portion of the trail be relocated to prevent potential trail usage over private property. The Trails Committee moved the trail to accommodate the agreement; with a new gate to be constructed in the future.

The Brookline Trail appears to be a newer trail, and it is unknown who created or who gave permission for the creation. S. Wyskiel opined that the Brookline Mountain Bike Trail Group may have created, and they may have thought that the Brookline boundary was further out than it actually is. This will need to be investigated.

There appeared to be a gate marked as "Private Property/No Trespassing" on Town owned property. S. Birch stated that the gate was actually private property under ownership of the Hildreth-Birch Family, and had been part of a Lot Line Relocation plan approved by the Town prior to the property transfer. A. Birch will provide a copy of the Lot Line Relocation Plan to J. Oehler.

J. Peters noted that there are 3 gates to be installed, 1 near the Cell Tower, 1 near the Amos White property near the East Trail, and the last on Hayden Rd where the Town properties meet the West Trail. The Trails Committee suggested that the log landing off the Cell Tower Road/Trail be used as parking for trail users. (Multiple discussions at one time, could not hear conversation. CC)J. Oehler cautioned against using the log landing as a parking area due to lack of visibility. (Multiple discussions at one time, could not hear conversation. CC)

NH Fish & Game has created the "Trails for People & Wildlife" to better inform the public and provide guidance on what to do or not to do for both trail users and persons maintaining/creating trails. This can be found at their website at <https://www.wildlife.state.nh.us/trails/index.html> Wildlife impact along trails, recommendations and stewardship issues continued to be discussed for a brief time.

T. Dufresne stated that the trail usage will need to be determined by the HCC; S. Wyskiel noted that Town residents voted for the purchase, in part, to allow the existing trails to remain open. J. Bruneau stated that a discussion on the trails only may need occur. A. White, Trail Committee Member and abutter to the property, stated that he has issues with the recommendations made as part of the plan. He has built many of the public trails from Hollis to Brookline, Milford and Mason. He specifically disagrees with the use of wood chips on the trails, he has used wood chips on many of the trails with no invasive species issues. Discussion of trail materials used for construction and maintenance continued for a brief period.

T. Dufresne stated that any trails to be closed will not be closed immediately, these trails will be judged on characters and features. He felt the best way to close any trail would be not to maintain it. He reminded those present that any recommendations are just that, and that the HCC must meet the needs of all residents, not just a single group when considering future uses of the property as a whole.

A. White felt that the property already had a diversity of uses at the present. C. Birch stated that he has issues with wood chips being used due to invasive species; he is seeing more and more invasive species arriving in the area via landscaping use of wood chips and has pulled some of these species off trails himself. Seeds are adapting to survive in more difficult conditions. Discussion of trail issues briefly continued.

A. Birch asked who decides the process of installing gates, parking lots, and other items, as she is an abutter to the parcel. The public does not always stay on the trails, littering and erosion continues to be an issue, and she would not like to see this get out of hand. T. Davies noted that during the recent Roadside Clean-up, a considerable amount of trash had been removed from public streets and roads; he felt that the impact to private properties could be minimized by keeping public parking areas as far away from private property as possible. Discussion of potential parking areas, erosion controls and water bar installation occurred. (Multiple discussions at one time, could not hear conversation. CC)

T. Dufresne asked J. Peters to mark the proposed gate locations on a map. (Multiple discussions at one time, could not hear conversation. CC)

S. Birch provided historical information on the property to T. Dufresne, who will ask Dawn Desaulniers, IT Director, to include on the HCC's web page.

HCC thanked Trails Committee & Forest Committee members for their attendance and input. Discussion of the management plan ended, with those members, J. Oehler, and members of the Hildreth-Birch Family leaving the meeting at 8:06 pm.

#### *HCC DISCUSSION*

T. Davies expressed his concern with the Trails Commission appearing to have significant control over Conservation property. J. Bruneau reminded members that S. Wyskiel stated she had no issues with the Trail recommendations. Further discussion of trails and property uses occurred. T. Davies felt that since the HCC had hired J. Oehler to create a management plan for the property, which he used his professional designation and training to complete the plan, the HCC could not allow a one-sided interest to affect the outcome of the property use supposed to be used by all. P. Band suggested that the parking area not be built. (Multiple discussions at one time, could not hear conversation. CC)

L. Bianco thought that it would be wise to promote alternatives to get people to Conservation areas without having to build parking areas, such as biking from the Silver Lake State Park Parking Lot. P. Band felt that the biggest concern is malignant uses of the property by the public, such as removing gates, and illegal trash and oil dumping, along with other concerns. T. Davies felt that the HCC should be making the decisions for Conservation property, not other Town entities, to keep the balance for all users. The HCC should not relinquish the control of the property. T. Dufresne did not feel that

the HCC was doing that; maintenance and policing issued were discussed. Due to the lateness of the hour, further discussion was tabled to a future meeting.

#### **ERNEST HARDY BAXTER ROAD PROPERTY**

The Purchase and Sales agreement has been agreed to by all parties, and now the Deed language for the property must be determined. T. Dufresne and Staff Member Connie Cain created potential deed restrictions by pulling language from previous property deeds and agreements, and these have been sent to both the Trails and Forest Committees for input. T. Dufresne will be emailing HCC members with the same, and asked members to provide their input as well. This language will be needed prior to the deed creation.

#### **BOARD & COMMITTEE UPDATES**

*Treasurers Report – Thom Davies*

T. Davies asked Rachael Gosselin, Finance Director, for an update. At this time, the estimated LUCT amount to be deposited to the HCC account is approximately \$179,000 since the first of the year.

There is approximately \$711,200 in the HCC account as of the end of April. With the Hardy Lot purchase funds of \$450,000 and the stewardship reserve of \$10,000 accounted for, this leaves approximately \$251,200 available as cash. P. Edmunds asked if the remaining Birch Hill property discussions should be brought forward again; T. Dufresne stated an offer has been made to the owners, he is waiting for further communications from them.

A booth application was received from the Old Home Days Committee for this year's event, occurring on September 13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup>. All members in favor of participating, and T. Davies will submit the form.

There were no Planning Board or Board of Selectmen updates available at meeting time.

#### **ANNUAL ROADSIDE CLEAN-UP WRAP-UP**

T. Davies was commended for the information provided to the local press. The Hollis-Brookline High School (HBHS) Booster Club provided gloves and reflective vests to the HBHS Track Team, who were given the option of participating or running a 5K race by their coach. Dave Connor's workplace also provided 100 reflective vests to be handed out to participants in the event, about one-third were used during the event. All in all another well-attended event, and many thanks to the HCC members and the public who participated.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

T. Dufresne and J. Bruneau were called out on an emergency wetlands situation on a Pine Hill Road property over the past weekend, May 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>. Water issues caused cattle to become cut off from accessing their feed, and both gentlemen were called to access the situation due to wetland issues. The entire field is low, and fill was needed to allow the cattle to be fed and attended to. The property owner will need to address the matter with the Dept. of Environmental Services to provide a long-term solution should the cattle remain on the property.

Nashua Wild & Scenic River Committee has asked that participating communities re-appoint members now that the Federal government has approved the designation, and the Committee will become a Council. Although LeeAnn Wolff was unable to attend tonight's meeting, she had previously stated that she would welcome reappointment to this Committee/Council.

*T. Davies motioned to appoint LeeAnn Wolff as the Hollis representative to the Nashua Wild & Scenic River Committee/Council; seconded by L. Bianco. All members in favor, none opposed or abstained, and the motion to appoint LeeAnn Wolff as Hollis representative was approved by a vote of 6-0-0.*

#### **MINUTES**

*T. Dufresne made the motion to accept the public minutes of the May 1, 2019 meeting as written; seconded by J. Bruneau. All members voted in favor, none opposed or abstained, and the minutes were approved by a vote of 6-0-0.*

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

*J. Bruneau made the motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by L. Bianco. All members voted in favor, none opposed or abstained, and the motion carried by a vote of 6-0-0. The meeting adjourned at 8:38 pm.*

Respectfully submitted,  
Connie Cain  
Staff