

## Conway Conservation Commission

### **WEDNESDAY, March 11, 2020 6:30P.M. WHITAKER HOME SITE MEETING HOUSE**

Present: Chair Rob Adair, Vice Chair Nat Lucy, Peter Minnich, Dan Lucy, Pat Ferland, Linda Kearney

Absent: Larry Huemmler

The meeting was called to order by Chair Rob Adair at **6:32pm**.

#### **1. Approval of Minutes**

Minutes for the **February 19th** commission meeting were approved unanimously after a brief discussion about the Samuel O'Reilly (formerly Wyatt) house, near Shedd Woods.

#### **2. Public Comment**

No public comment was given.

#### **3. Reports and Other Business**

The first topic of discussion was the old Pine Tree School, a 4.3 acre lot in Conway. This was brought to the commission by the town's request, as they wanted a recommendation as to what should be done with the property. David Weathers, the Selectmen's representative, suggested that the decision be put to a town ballot. Long term use of the site would be costly, however, with the main cost being building removal and the secondary cost being irrigation to keep the athletic field in a maintained state.

After a fair amount of deliberation, Linda brought to everyone's attention that the annual cost for maintaining the lot remained an unknown due to the uncertainty of the use of the lot. She then noted that as far as conservation goes, the lot was more or less outside the purview of the commission. Nat agreed. Eventually the commission came to a resolution that it felt neither strongly for selling it nor strongly for keeping it, and were opposed to neither.

Nat Lucy made a motion to send a memo to town manager Tom Holmes that the Commission was not opposed to selling it. Further, the memo should state the property is high in recreation value but low in conservation value. Linda seconded the motion. The vote passed with Rob and David abstaining.

The commission then moved on to the other subject of discussion: the ongoing maintenance of the Whitaker Woods trails. It was noted that the trails needed fill to maintain their height and condition. However, the main issue with the maintenance of the Whitaker Woods trails was decidedly the problem of animal waste. It was especially bad this year due to the increase in tourism and increase in dog-walking specifically. Due to the increased proportion of dog walkers and increased overall traffic, the situation has gotten out of hand. The walkers do not use bags to collect the waste, so it collects on the trail instead. There was previously a receptacle in place for waste management, but it was never emptied so was largely ineffective.

The solution that the commission reached was to provide a new trail specifically for dog walkers, so that regular hikers would not be affected by the dog traffic (and waste). The reasoning behind this was that there is little to no education on proper dog cleanup policy for Whitaker Woods, and so providing a clearly marked alternative should prevent poop on the trails. It was noted that this sort of policy would have no enforcement. It was decided that the trails would need to be widened so that a machine could go through to maintain them. The idea behind this is to provide a perfectly good alternative, and hopefully thereby solve the issue outright. It was noted that this new trail will need to be mapped out, maintained, and marked with dog signs.

Officers were reelected unanimously, and the status quo was kept. Just for a refresher, this means:

- Chair Rob Adair
- Vice Chair Nat Lucy
- Treasurer Linda Kearney

Next, Selectman David described his work in the previous couple of days, as it was committee-related. He described 9-10 points of concern with the ongoing plan to dredge and fill near Glen Ellis. Nat noted that this was essentially the first test of the Saco River Corridor. He also noted that the DES (Department of Environmental Services) took the recommendation of the committee to heart. Nat emphasized that the purpose of that commission was to protect the entire river corridor, and not just small sections. David agreed.

The meeting then moved on to the subject of the trees leaning over the Samuel O'Reilly (formerly Wyatt) house, near Shedd Woods. David asked whether or not the concerned party was expecting us to take them down. Linda then explained that if the branches were over your property, you would have right to cut them. She then noted that since it was the insurance company that pointed

the trees out, we should let them just think on it for a bit. David suggested waiting for a forester to tell us when the time is right to cut them, and then go ahead. Rob and David agreed to meet with the landowners and request that they flag the trees.

The meeting was adjourned at **7:15pm**, as motioned by Linda Kearney.