

Minutes of the Meredith Conservation Commission Meeting December 3rd, 2009

Members present: Don MacFarlane, John Sherman, Ralph Pisapia, Peter Miller, Bob LeCount, Paula Wanzer, Mark Billings

Alternate members present: Dan Heyduk, Robert Davis, Mark Tuckerman

Guests: Duncan McNeish, Treasurer, Waukegan Shore Owners Association (WSOA), Tim Muller, resident, True Road.

Minutes of November 19th, 2009

The minutes were approved unanimously.

Dredge and Fill Report

The following applications to the Department of Environmental Services were reviewed since the last report:

Robert Middlebrook 215 Leopard's Leap Road Tax Map I-13, Lot# 14	Recommend Approval Replace existing seasonal dock with new 3 slip seasonal dock with canopy.
Town Of Meredith Town Park near boat launch	Recommend Approval Repair stone retaining wall no change

Reimbursement

By motion of Pisapia, seconded by Billings, the following reimbursement was approved unanimously:

\$34.82	Daniel Heyduk	Items for 186 acre forest trail system
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Page Pond

No update. It appears that the logging has not resumed yet.

Signage

Volunteer Warren Clark has completed the large Smyth Easement sign that will be posted at the Hamlin Conservation Area entrance on Chemung Road. Clark would like to meet with the Commission to discuss trail signs in Page Pond, time to be arranged.

Hamlin Conservation Area Trail Use Survey – Columbus Day Weekend

Miller summarized the results of the informal survey conducted during the three day weekend. The trails were busy thanks to peak foliage and perfect weather, with visitors from Pennsylvania, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts mingling with Meredith, Laconia, Gilford, New Hampton, and Center Harbor residents. Couples and large family groups predominated. There were no solo hikers. Most parties had at least one dog. Peak use time was 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Average length of stay was approximately 2 hours. Most visitors utilized the yellow and blue trails, with only two parties accessing the more distant red trails. In addition to hikers, there were two trail runners, one mountain biker, and a couple doing letterboxing (similar to geocaching). Several parties had difficulty with route finding, indicating where improvements in blazing or signage are needed. Virtually all visitors expressed delight with the Hamlin/Eames Conservation Areas, commenting on how clean they are and how rewarding the hikes were.

Open Space Committee

Sherman reports that they have completed all objectives. Boundary blazing consumed 18 quarts of paint.

Snake River

Duncan McNeish updated the Commission on the WSOA's campaign to preserve this tract of land. The mailing they sent out to their membership has thus far produced 40 contributions totaling \$6,000. Their PR will move into high gear after the holidays, with presentations to be made to local service organizations. McNeish displayed the poster they have designed. The WSOA will defer signing a purchase and sale agreement with the property owner until May. McNeish stated that the WSOA's primary concern is the stewardship of the property after purchase.

MacFarlane reported that Community Development Director John Edgar would like to schedule a workshop with the Board of Selectmen regarding Snake River. The Commission must decide how much it will contribute toward the purchase before this workshop can be held. The question of the dollar amount triggered lengthy discussion. Pisapia emphasized that the Commission's contribution must be used solely for the purchase of the property, not applied to administrative costs. LeCount stated that the contribution should be a "not to exceed" amount. Miller emphasized that what the Town of Meredith will get in return needs to be spelled out much more clearly. He argued that Attorney Mattson's language ("legally enforceable right to enforce the conservation restrictions") is too vague. He would prefer that, on the date of purchase, the Town of New Hampton grant a conservation easement to a recognized conservation entity, the easement to identify water quality protection as the purpose of the acquisition, with the easement specifying how that purpose would be upheld in perpetuity. The Meredith Conservation Commission would select the easement grantee.

Miller also noted that this would be our first application of the new statute that enables investing town monies in non-town properties, thus it is paramount that we “get it right” so as not to jeopardize future initiatives of this sort.

Following discussion, the Commission chose not to commit to a dollar amount at this juncture. MacFarlane will pursue the matter of a conservation easement on Snake River with the relevant parties. McNeish stated that he is content with the Commission’s stance and that our resolve to commit a “substantial amount” toward purchase of the property is sufficient to leverage contributions.

Natural Resource Inventory II

So that the Town Planner can move forward with some zoning revisions, the Commission must formally accept the NRI Phase II Report.

Thus Pisapia moved, seconded by Billings, that the Commission accept the NRI Phase II Report subject to the editorial revisions recommended by the Commission. Motion passed unanimously.

186 Acre Forest

The Commission resumed discussion of the naming issue. Wanzer moved, seconded by Miller, that the name be selected by popular vote, balloting to occur in various Meredith locations and via newspaper clip-outs, with the public choosing from three names selected by the Commission. Motion passed unanimously.

Member Comment

Heyduk will give Laconia Citizen reporter Erin Plummer a tour of the 186 acre forest. She is writing an article on local cross-country skiing. Those wishing to join this outing should meet at the Community Center Wednesday at 2:00 PM.

Recent high winds have caused blowdowns in the 186 acre forest. Heyduk requested help in clearing the trails.

Pisapia will soon have the first draft of the proposed Sherman Easement ready for review.

Pisapia invites all MCC members and spouses to a holiday gathering at his house Sunday the 13th at 3:00 PM.

Chairman Comment

The Belknap County Conservation District is meeting on Dec 11th at 3:00 PM to discuss natural resource concerns, the responses to be used by USDA and NRCS to set priorities.

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Miller
Secretary