

**DRAFT Peterborough Conservation Commission minutes  
January 26, 2023, 7 p.m., Peterborough Town House**

Present: Jo Anne Carr, Swift Corwin, Dick McNamara, John Patterson, Bob Strong,  
Francie Von Mertens, Robert Wood

Eric Masterson, Harris Center; Bruce Tucker, Nubanusit Neighborhood

**Land Conservation – Lahey Conservation Easement support funding**

Eric Masterson from the Harris Center described a conservation easement recently completed on 122 acres in Peterborough (with an additional 25 in Greenfield). He cited the property's natural resource values: connection with significant conserved lands, high ranking by the NH Wildlife Action Plan, as well as a highest priority ranking by the Peterborough Open Space Committee that scored properties in town larger than 25 acres for 13 standard land conservation criteria.

As in past conservation easement support funding from the Peterborough's Land Acquisition Capital Reserve Fund, Eric requested \$5,000 that would match a donation by the landowner. Those funds would go into the Harris Center Easement Enforcement Fund that covers costs of annual easement monitoring and an insurance policy against easement infractions on any of the Center's 125 easements.

In response to questions, Eric said easement landowners reserve the right to post their land (the Lahey land is not currently posted); the capital reserve fund has \$195,000 balance (note correction: the balance is \$159,000); for public benefit, the Open Space Committee's natural resource value checklist scored the property in the top five in town. A question whether animal husbandry, a standard allowance in easements, included a commercial horse farm, Francie Von Mertens said that question had come up in the sale of similar easement land on Bogle Road, and it was determined that commercial riding operation would not be allowed. That said, Von Mertens said, a legal challenge has not been made.

Swift Corwin made a motion (Patterson second):

**"In support of the Lahey Conservation Easement, to approve a \$5,000 donation from the town's Land Acquisition Capital Reserve Fund to the Harris Center's easement monitoring and enforcement fund."**

The motion passed unanimously.

Von Mertens will present a similar request for approval to the Select Board, co-agent to expend the Land Acquisition Capital Reserve Fund.

She said that Ed Henault, longtime chair of the former Open Space Committee and recently deceased, would be pleased. He had worked on securing an easement on the parcel back a decade.

**Conditional Use Permit – Nubanusit Brook shoreland impacts**

Bruce Tucker, Nubanusit Neighborhood & Farm, presented plans for an electric vehicle (EV) charger station that would require trenching from an existing transformer located in the 100-foot Shoreland Conservation Zone. The trench would cross a level grassy area to a charging station outside of the Zone. The transformer is the only one in the Neighborhood that has access to parking.

Members agreed that the trenching impacts would be temporary.

Jo Anne Carr made a motion (Robert Wood second):

**"To support the Nubanusit Neighborhood Conditional Use Permit application for trenching to tap into an existing transformer as shown on the plans submitted to**

**the Conservation Commission on January 26. Construction shall follow appropriate erosion control measures."**

The motion passed unanimously. Von Mertens will draft comment to the Planning Board to communicate ConCom support for the CUP application.

**Removal of Contoocook River North and Transcript dams / consideration**

The agenda item was moved to February meeting. Of interest, Dick McNamara said a discussion with the local rivers advisory committee came up with a lot of unknowns requiring more information; and Woody Wood mentioned that he did his Master's thesis on removal pros and cons for a dam in Swanzey, removed some 12 years later.

**Open Space Committee website**

As background Von Mertens said the Open Space Committee, no longer meeting, created a website independent of the town website that didn't have adequate capacity at that time. Designed with EverWeb by OSC member Anne Huberman, it turned out to be incompatible with the town's website server. Ali at Town House has been rebuilding it on the town website, piece by piece, placing them in different locations on the town website, rather than maintaining it intact under the ConCom site on the town website, along with other town committees, each with links.

Von Mertens said the OSC content covers the basics of land conservation based on natural resources, conservation benefits and priorities, tools, history of projects in town (conservation easements, land donations, fundraising); locations of public trails; who to contact about land protection. And more.

It's all there, organized with care, intact on one site focused on natural resource protection.

Options:

Contract a website person to update, edit and turn the OSC site to ConCom site; or find a volunteer to do it, possibly as ConCom member. Hope was expressed that a website genius could overcome the apparent incompatibility of EverWeb and the town's server.

Bringing someone onto the ConCom also meshes with Swift Corwin's recommendation for new members, not "long in the tooth" like present members who have been members for decades. Members agreed finding fresh energy was needed, and that social media was the best way to get word out to younger potential members.

Carr will reach out to Fash for website expertise as in an intern, and Francie will spread the word for website pros who would volunteer their services, as a first choice, or be contracted, or a hybrid of the two. She also will talk with a RiverMead staffer who expressed an interest to Anne Huberman, OSC website designer.

**Natural Resources Inventory**

While Fash works on mapping natural resources, Carr will send around Jaffrey's NRI and Dick McNamara will send Bow's for ConCom members to peruse.

**Other** Woody said that when a storm brought down a large tree across the Nubanusit by his house, with bank loss and ice dams in mind, he learned from the state "rivers" that a landowner can remove the tree. After discussion with Scott Farrar across the river about his willingness to share removal expense, Scott Farrar did the removal.

/fvm