Franconia Conservation Commission (FCC)

Meeting: Wed April 28, 2021, 4 pm, via Zoom

Members present: Chris Nicodemus (Chair), Mary Grote, Ginny Jeffryes, Art Daily, Jill Brewer, Mark Ober, Red McCarthy

Others present: Kim Cowles

Draft minutes of meeting 3-24-21 reviewed. Discussion to change word “involved” to “volunteers” regarding the record of commenter Chris Thayer’s role with ACT - with which he prefaced his comments as context. Changed to reflect that. Red moves to accept the minutes as amended. Mary seconds. Unanimous vote to accept.

NHACC (NH Association of Conservation Commissions) emails re legislative updates were sent to Chris, presumably because he’s Chair- others on FCC don’t receive them. He will forward them to remainder of members when received. He notes two NH bills which seem relevant to us on initial read of the email:

1) HB 177 re siting landfills more than 2 miles from NH State Parks. General discussion that while we don’t abut Dalton, this is close and so impacts our community. Red notes he goes to Forest Lake State Park, as do others here. Discussion that water and aquifer contamination could be issues, and potential contaminated waste disposal is an issue, both at current Bethlehem landfill as well as potentially at the new proposed site near Forest Lake State Park. All members of the commission at today’s meeting express support of HB 177. Discussion of possible wordings for a resolution, following which Ginny makes a motion for the following wording: “We, the Franconia Conservation Commission, resolve to support HB 177, which prohibits the siting of new landfills within 2 miles of any NH State Park.” Chris seconds. Passes unanimously. Mary asks whether the letter can specify it was a unanimous vote of all of our members. Ginny will add each one our names as voting yes to make that clear. She will determine when the NH Senate Energy and Natural Resources committee hearing process is accepting testimony – legislative website currently says it went to that committee on 4-13-21 but no status is listed beyond that. She will send letter to those members, as well as to all the Senate members prior to it being on their voting docket.

2) Second potentially relevant NH legislative bill: HB 621 – impacts money going to LCHIP (Land and Community Heritage Investment Program) by cutting back on the portion of deed fees that goes to that program. Chris notes that the Town has benefited from the LCHIP program, for example in getting some adjunct funding for the Town’s Lawrence Family Forest conservation land acquisition. NHACC is opposed to the bill. Current status per check of the legislative website is that it’s been retained in committee at the House since 3/9/21, and the committee’s public hearing was 2/17, no further status available. Chris notes we don’t have enough info about the bill to discuss a position on it today.

NHACC Granit Update:   (Chris). An email from NHACC mentions that input from conservation commissions to The Nature Conservancy is welcome to update the NHGRANIT data base map of conservation lands. The corrections or additions are due there by June 11. Chris will forward the email to us. Red says he will look at the NHGRANIT map. He mentions it is very useful resource for looking at developments, roads, projects. Ginny says that when she looked at it about 6 months ago, she remembers thinking that Lawrence Family Forest wasn’t marked on it as a conservation property. Chris will also mention to ACT to check that all their properties are listed.

Debrief from March 24 discussion and updates on valley trails (Chris): Meeting got a number of interested people together. Red says FCC is a catalyst for trails, and perhaps we could coordinate an “adopt a trail” type of model, where people could adopt trails to keep them clean and appropriately used. There are local volunteers and landowners developing new trails in an area near him, not part of the general trail system but a good addition. Re the former Hyde property where Pebble Beach trail is – Red says perhaps the volunteer group could move the trail mostly to the Lawrence property; Red knows a few people skilled and interested in this kind of thing. Red thinks we need to keep the dialogue going with the interested people. Ginny likes the idea; but she still isn’t clear on how far beyond town-owned or FCC-held easement our responsibility can go. Chris updates us that since last month, ACT is looking to hire a trail manager for ACT properties, but also to possibly help with selected other trails. Right now trail management/maintenance is somewhat haphazard – neighbors, NEMBA, people known to the Rec program – anyone who volunteers in their spare time. Chris says that the former Hyde property was sold to people who will be building a house, and that the new owners (Schmitt) are generally supportive of the trail system. It may be possible to move the PB trail to the edge of their property where it’s wooded, rather than to the adjacent recently clear-cut border of the Lawrence property. He notes that the 94 acre Noonan property is listed for sale now with Beth Horan of PB&S – doesn’t know any specifics about that.

2021 FCC budget: Jill: reports our budget for this year was decreased to $250, down from $1000, proposed by the SB to match the expenses we had had the previous several years. The budget was passed at Town Meeting early April. NHACC annual dues are $250. We hadn’t spent the remainder. Ginny mentions that Kim did have someone design/manufacture conservation boundary placards several years ago, which we use to mark the boundaries on our easement, but we have plenty remaining. Also, while usually we don’t attend conservation conferences, both Ginny and Chris attended the on-line NHACC annual educational meeting in November, but neither of us requested reimbursement, which was ok. Chris says that he wouldn’t want FCC members to decide not to attend a conference because of needing to pay for it themselves. We will discuss budget requests next winter in advance of budget time.

Next meeting: TBA 3rd or 4th week of June, possibly in person at the Dow pavilion.

Meeting adjourned at 4:45 pm.

Minutes by Ginny Jeffryes