

Conservation Commission Meeting

October 25, 2023

Members present: Brad Jones, Bob Keating, Bill Kenny, Allison Knab, Bill McCarthy, Dan McAuliffe, Chris West

Non-members present: Mark Connors, Town Planner; Residents Chris Mahan and Jeehee Cho

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m.

Minutes:

- Ms. Knab motioned, Mr. McAuliffe second, approved of the public and nonpublic September 2023 minutes as written. The motion passed unanimously.

Mailbox

- The Commission received a dues notification from NHACC for \$525. Mr. McCarthy motioned, Mr. McAuliffe seconded a motion to pay the 2024 dues out of our budget. The motion passed unanimously.

Ross Property

Mr. Kenny discussed a memo from the Town Planner dated 10/25/23 regarding the property known as the Ross Brothers parcel. The parcel is at Tax Map 18, Lot 41, and is 17.6 acres proximate to Gifford Farm Road. The town is working with SELT on acquiring the property, which was appraised at \$150,000. Funds would potentially come from the Land Conservation Trust Fund, the New Hampshire Drinking and Ground Water Trust Fund, and the Source Water Protection program.

Mr. McCarthy motioned to open the public hearing to consider expending \$79,200 from the Land Conservation Trust Fund toward the purchase and associated costs of the acquisition. Ms. Knab seconded the motion; all voted in favor.

Mr. Mahan spoke in favor of the purchase and noted that once it is gone it will be gone forever.

Mr. McCarthy noted that it is adjacent to conservation land and could prevent potential development of other woodlots. He also noted that negotiations around this property have taken several years and we have now arrived at a mutually agreeable purchase price. Mr. Kenny said that this is a good use of the funds we are charged with shepherding.

Ms. Knab motioned, Mr. McCarthy seconded the motion to close the public hearing. All voted in favor.

Mr. McAuliffe motioned, Mr. McCarthy seconded a motion to expend up to \$79,200 from the Land Conservation Trust Fund toward the purchase and associated costs of the acquisition of the 17.6-acre parcel located adjacent to Stratham Memorial School proximate to Gifford Farm Road, identified as Tax Map 18, Lot 41, currently owned by the Ross Revocable Trust of 2006. The purpose of this property acquisition, which will include conservation deed restrictions, is to ensure the continued use of the property for passive recreational purposes, the protection of the Stratham Memorial School Wellhead Protection Area, and to maintain the property in perpetuity in a natural state. The motion passed unanimously.

Next Meeting: The Commission agreed to hold its next meeting on November 29th. We will not plan to hold a December meeting.

Other Business

- There will be trail work occurring on the Barker property, including fixing a bridge. Materials have been donated by Lowe's.
- A site walk will be held on November 3rd on the Ross property for purposes of a potential grant. Conservation members are encouraged to attend.

At 7:20, Ms. Knab motioned to enter a non-public session to discuss possible land acquisitions. Mr. McCarthy seconded the motion; all voted in favor.

At 7:35 Mr. McCarthy motioned, Mr. McAuliffe seconded a motion to exit the nonpublic session and seal the minutes. All voted in favor.

At 7:35 p.m. Mr. McAuliffe motioned, Mr. Keating seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Allison Knab