

Stratham Conservation Commission

Public Meeting Minutes

3/27/19

Present: Allison Knab, Bob Keating, Pat Elwell, Bill McCarthy, Ana Egana, Brad Jones, Dan McAullife

Also: Seth Hickey, Tavis Austin

Public Session

Called to order 7:04

The CC members participated in the Stratham Hill Park Association at 6:30. During that meeting Seth Hickey and student Cameron Oak presented a proposal for a new trail from the top of the hill at Stratham Hill Park/fire tower where the trees were cut. Cameron presented the location and felt that it was appropriate because it would allow connection of two trails. The Park Association and the CC had agreed to a moratorium on new trails in the park and forest because they are affecting the health of the environment. Dan Crow shared concerns that the trail is very steep and Pat Kelly from the Park Association noted that with steep slopes there is a higher likelihood of erosion. Seth and Cameron will revisit their request and get back to the groups if concerns can be addressed.

New Business

While Park Association members were still present, the groups continued discussion about the damage being caused by beavers in the park and forest. There was some internet request/discussion about setting up a streaming video for students to see the beaver activity. After considering what the options might be for beaver control, the groups agreed that it would probably not be a good idea to encourage students to become "attached" by a streaming video. The CC will be contacting experts to discuss the options for handling the situation. There is concern that damaged trees have the potential to create hazards for users of the park and forest. No decisions were made.

Seth brought forth a plan for trail work in 2019.

1. To replace a wooden plank bridge that is rotting and riders are crossing the stream bed when it is dry.
2. In town forest, Soggy Dollar trail with Edie Barker trails, there is an existing rock bridge that is currently preventing seasonal flows. Wants to build a narrow wooden bridge to replace rocks.
3. Also in town forest there is an area near the school that needs fill to help raise the grade back up.
4. At start of fire pit trail, there is a long plank bridge that needs to have processed gravel to increase the grade.
5. Barker old tractor road that people are avoiding when wet.
6. Bridge in low area of old roadway that again people are avoiding when wet.

Both 5 & 6 need material/stones brought in and spread to create passage on one side of the paths to limit impacts on areas that bike and walker traffic affect and keep people where they belong. The CC thanked Seth for providing information.

Minutes

No minutes were available for review.

Master Plan Discussion

The Horsley Witten Group is leading the update for the Master Plan. The firm also has been hired to update the Natural Resources Inventory (NRI, October 2011). Nate Kelly from Horsley Witten came to speak to the Park Association, Planning Board and Conservation Commission about both of these efforts. Nate explained they feel there are policies, recommendations, etc as part of the NRI and asked why is this so. As Pat explained, no master plan done for years and years, despite the efforts by the CC to update its section. When creating the NRI it really became out "mini master plan" to follow, but felt that moving this type of information to the Master Plan was a more appropriate location. The CC also requested the addition of more mapping, related info to climate change, how to support agricultural, MS4 concerns, add references to funding, what types of properties we want to focus on in the future, link to state wildlife action plan. It was also discussed that education of public was an area of potential growth for the CC. The CC would like to add forest management plan information to incorporate info regarding trails especially as they relate to users, in particular bikers and dog walkers. Nate suggested that, based on discussion he heard with the Park Association, moratorium on new trails also be included. The CC thanked him for presentation. Pat continues to attend Master Plan meetings as the CC rep.

Bob Baskerville from the Planning Board went to a septic system program recently. He shared that there are many changes being advocated with new technology that it's totally contradictory to how current septic designs are done in NH. There are findings that advocate NOT removing a topsoil layer when building a septic system because organics can remove up to 98% of contaminants. This may also be something that should be included in the CC section of the Master Plan as we address future groundwater contamination.

Mailbox

Monitoring report was received for Brad Jones property. It was discussed with Brad since it appears that there are structures being built within the easement. Brad will work with RCCD to correct the infringements.

Old Business

Clean up day – We currently have enough bags. Clean up day will be held 10 -2 May 18th. Will need to get someone to pick up trash bags. Pat will coordinate poster development and get to school and will create an event on the Facebook page. Tim will get Lindt chocolate. Lunch would be served in the middle of the day (subs). Bill will email Seth to ask about hanging sign. Residents will be encouraged to work in their own neighborhoods. We will distribute info to tell people to be cautious.

There will be no rain barrel or compost bin sale this year as last years' sales were slow.

Planning Board Updates/Municipal Updates

Tavis explained Lindt was granted height variances for their project. They will be redeveloping areas that are already impervious/impacted. Might need a traffic study, if a turn lane is required, there is a pond on the side of the road that could be affected. Lindt will be doubling the number of trucks (and chocolate!) by 2020.

PB granted conditional use permit to Until for maintenance work in golf course.

Dan moved, Ana seconded, going into non-public session to discussion land easement acquisition.
Motion approved. 8:55 pm

Following non-public session, Allison moved, Ana Seconded, closing the non-public session and sealing the minutes. Motion approved. 9:30 pm

Allison moved, Ana seconded, close of meeting. Motion passed 9:31 pm

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 10, 7:00pm at the Stratham Municipal Center.

Respectfully submitted, Pat Elwell