Franconia Conservation Commission February 16, 2016

Attending: Kim, Ginny, Eric, Kathy, Red, Mary, Bernadette, Rebecca Brown

Fox Hill: Kim and Eric walked part of the boundary and noted there are four pins missing and that an abutter has items and piles encroaching on the town land. SPNF (holds the easement) has fund for projects in this area. Eric will present a proposal to survey and document the property boundaries (last done in 2007 behind the cemetery section). The upslope areas need to be re-blazed and documented. We can create a current map of the Fox Hill/campground area and more information delineating the common boundary. The owner of the Hillwinds’ Motel is concerned with public parking near their motel and hikers with their dogs presenting a nuisance. Perhaps the FCC could expand the public parking area off of Dow Avenue. There is an access to the far end of the property down the driveway, owned by the Williams family, next to the campground. This area also offers access to the Meadow Brook Area. The Williams have asked the FCC for a private drive sign and two no parking signs…Kim will make these.

Lawrence property: Rebecca gave us an update on the purchase negotiations with the Lawrence family. The FCC has made an offer, contiguous on receiving $50,000 from the mitigation fund. The family wondered if the town would buy the property without this grant? We should hear from the funding committee by early March and can move forward after receiving the news. Rebecca feels comfortable that the family will wait to hear from us. Bill Oliver, lawyer, has been asked to check on possible parking spots on Bob Lawrence’s property (to own not lease by the town). Sawmill Road which is a town road may be a possible area to create parking at the current turn around located there. A question was asked about access through the town owned forest adjacent to the Lawrence property; this is not a good access point as it is very wet and contains a lot of beaver activity.

Brewer family property: The Brewer family is offering an easement of 11 acres along the Ham Branch of the Gale River. The property is on Ridge Road. ACT would hold the easement and Rebecca has asked the FCC/town of Franconia to consider being a “backup easement holder”. It would be most unusual for the town to have to act in any legal capacity. This area protects a riparian area, vegetation management area for the river, and wetlands. This section was part of the clean water healthy trout survey done this past summer. This could be a test/demonstration area for ACT. This part of the river was once dammed and became an area for a local swim club! The area could be used for school and public field trips; it is not suited for a general public access area. Stream protection is the major element.

Crocker property: Rebecca made us aware of a second piece of property, the Crocker property on route 142 opposite Gale River Road (where Copper Cannon is). This property is being donated for an ACT easement. Sarah Haskell Crocker was the owner of the property, she died last summer. Her family wants to donate the land area as a Memorial Forest. Rebecca reported that the area is a fascinating wetlands complex, has great geology diversity, and will make an excellent field trip education area. There will probably be no hunting allowed; it will be a type of sanctuary area. At a future time we will discuss how FCC will be involved with the easement and expectation. There will probably be a land trust to be steward of the property.

It was mentioned that the FCC currently has an easement on the property behind the Franconia Airport on Easton Road. Should we ask ACT to be our backup easement holder?

Perhaps the members of the committee can find a time to walk the Brewer, the Crocker, and the Lawrence properties so we are all on the same page of self-information.

Northern Pass: Ginny caught us up to date. She has filled the Franconia town intervention petition. She recently attended a meeting with Northern Pass officials held at an Easton CC meeting. The Northern Pass folks brought various map segments. There were many strong and specific questions asked and few responsible or comprehensive answers given and then only specific to the Easton town limits. Nothing has been finalized on the design of the project.

Meeting adjourned 6:40

Kathy McCarthy