Conservation Commission meeting March 31, 2016 4 pm – 6:15 pm

Attending: Eric Pospesil, Chris Nicodemus, Mary Grote, Virginia Jeffryes, Kim Cowles (left at 6)

Guest: Rebecca Brown of Ammonoosuc Conservation Trust (ACT) (for second half of meeting).

Crocker property on Route 142 which ACT is acquiring: ACT owns it, should Conservation Commission take on holding the conservation easement?

 Discussion that we currently hold a conservation easement on the trails on 94 acre piece privately owned next to the airport. Group reviewed McKenzie Woods subdivion map which shows that easement. At next meeting we will address reviewing and marking this conservation easement.

Eric moves to accept the Conservation Easement on the Crocker property if we find the conditions of the easement acceptable. Chris Nicodemus seconds. Voted unanimously in favor.

Fox Hill park boundary walk:

 Eric walked Hillwinds side/east side with Kim. Eric has sent a proposal to the town to do a proper traverse around property for survey of the boundary along the south end near Gale River, where the boundary is no longer clear. Most other places along boundary have pins in place that are clear.

Ray Marshall did original survey in 1973 but record lost in a fire last year (H Burgess).

Eric suggests considering at some time in future finding out whether Franstead owner would consider either selling us a small unused corner or doing a lot line adjustment to better connect Fox Hill Park to the new Lawrence property.

Gale River trail – consider making it wheelchair accessible.

 Fox Hill parking lot to swimming hole behind Green Frog could be made wheelchair accessible via ledgepack development. After that, we could consider also doing same on existing river trail from Splude’s place to the way along the Dow. Would need to be grant funded.

Chris’s update: CIRD grant from January - we did not get it. Will reapply in 2 yrs, the next opportunity. MTAG grant from Plan NH - Involves working with Tara Bamford of North Country Council. Chris will submit MTAP grant tomorrow once Select Board signs off on it. It would enable further upgrading the zoning ordinance to make walkable village center. If got grant, we could have public planning sessions. Will find out by May if we get it.

Rebecca Brown joined us at 5:15 pm:

--Crocker property on NW side of Rte 142- 63 acres. ACT plans to use it as a sanctuary, preserved “as is” due to unusual features and intent of the original landowner. Wetland bowl, fairly flat. At present will have no hunting, which will go in management plan, not in the easement, because conditions could change over time.

The easement template is an iterative process. Both easements (Crocker and Lawrence) will include public access. It’s standard over time via the process to decide whether to allow recreational motorized use, for example. Will address hunting in future when we go over the templates – landowner typically decides that, unless state funding was involved in which case hunting is allowed. Lawrence property easement will have strong language about protection of the areas along the streams “Special Treatment areas” with no trails, timbering, etc. to allow vegetation to grow. Essential part of the reason for acquisition is the watershed/riparian zone protection.

Kim suggests sending out survey to Lawrence property abutters to ask their views on use during the process.

Annual monitoring: As easement holder on various properties, ACT sends out an annual monitoring report for the property, after walking the whole boundary. On easements they hold they require Forest Management plan from landowner, and information about trails. Landowner’s responsibility is to clean up any easement violations if found; easement holder would simply notify landowner. FCC would do this on Crocker property.

Kim walked part of Crocker property with ACT, then took Ginny to walk there. There are are some tires and a large piece of plastic sheeting to remove from one site on Crocker property. Will see if can use Franconia volunteers to do this – various options reviewed.

Need to put some rocks on vehicle access trails to prevent traffic there.

ACT closing will happen soon, will work on Crocker easement after that over time.

Lawrence property expected to close by May 1. Easement discussions will follow that over time.

Access discussion to Lawrence property:

 Researching the specifics of the town-owned Sawmill Lane access, and the 50 foot right of way easement on Bolduc property to Town Forest on Route 18. Another option is off Old County Road potentially if prop owners willing. Red and Ginny went with Kim on a walk to look at the Sawmill Lane approach.

Big bridge over Lafayette Brook doesn’t fit with preserving riparian zone, and not necessary for access. ACT concerned about minimizing impact. Eric suggests using simply a suspension walking bridge on sunken wood poles for Rte 18 access, doesn’t think larger is needed. General discussion about no need for motorized emergency access, as search/rescue teams in our area typically can carry out injured party effectively, if need ever arises. Larger bridge would add extra expense. Not at point of needing decision or plan, will be ongoing discussion in future.

Various survey and subdivision maps reviewed of Lawrence property, and other local recreation trails.

Next meeting to be last Thursday in April – April 28.