

Franconia Conservation Commission (FCC)

Meeting: October 22, 4 pm

Members present: Chris Nicodemus, Ginny Jeffryes, Julie Weisman, Michelle Sauque, Robin Ross, Jill Brewer (departed 5 pm).

Guest: Stephen Schwartz, planning board

Membership: Robin Ross was appointed by Select Board and took her oath.

Chris says Mary Grote stepped back from her role as Planning Board representative FCC membership, and she wants to be an alternate. The Planning Board voted that Stephen Schwartz should be their representative FCC member. Ginny moves that Steve Schwartz be a full FCC member as the planning board representative, and that Mary Grote go to FCC alternate status. Michelle seconds. Unanimous vote in favor. Select Board to appoint.

Minutes: Chris moves to approve the September 11, 2024 minutes. Michelle seconds. Unanimous vote in favor.

Lawrence Forest NEMBA Trail Project Proposal update: Chris reports no update from NEMBA. Ginny suggests that Chris communicates to be careful to keep their equipment tires clean to prevent invasive seeds from other places.

McKenzie Woods: we need to place a few missing conservation placards along the airport edge of the easement when it gets too cold for ticks.

Town Forest ACT Easement: Jill says the Town attorney is looking over the proposed easement language.

Fox Hill Park - Society for Protection of NH Forests easement: Chris says the border uncertainty from near Hillwinds to the cemetery due to a few missing pins is still outstanding. Not a priority currently but needs to be addressed by the Select Board (SB) whether to do a survey at some point.

Lights at Dow Field: Julie mentions that the SB decided on additional street lights at Dow Field. Jill says that Steve Schwartz was at the SB meeting where it was discussed and he suggested having them point downward. Jill says they would turn off later in the evening but are needed because it gets dark at 4 pm this time of year and people use the field for things like cross-country skiing. Ginny is concerned about the wildlife disturbances from nighttime lights. Julie knows Doug Arion [NB: local semi-retired astronomy professor] and he's willing to give a presentation to the SB about the importance of the Dark Skies initiative. Ginny says he spearheaded the statewide Maine initiative on dark skies. Steve has communicated with Doug to tell him potential dates to talk with SB. Ginny thinks the FCC should make a recommendation to SB to not add more lights unless they're only on for specific events, because it's already too bright downtown with the bright Peabody Smith sign lights, Franconia Market lights, the Community church steeple, others. Julie agrees. Jill says the extra Dow lighting hasn't happened yet. Ginny moves that we make a recommendation to the SB that if Dow Field lights are installed that they're only used when needed for specific events. She says that the Energy Commission studied and removed certain street lights in town about 10 years ago due to unnecessary lighting, so this is undoing that progress. Jill will mention it to the SB we are against it. Steve thinks we shouldn't take a blanket position against the lights when we don't know the specifics involved, but should instead have a light project go forward if installed properly by limiting the time they are on and the direction of lights. He thinks that it could become a demonstration/education project, and that we could separately address

the significant light pollution at the Franconia Market complex. Jill points out that there is no ordinance addressing lights on private property within the Village district. We would like to know specifics of what has been proposed to SB. Julie thinks Doug Arion should be invited to talk to the larger community. With new homes being built, some towns hand out a sheet about lighting practices with the building permit. Jill says she will try to get more information about this from the SB. Jill says the skating rink lights have a timer. Julie thinks the Sugar Hill/Easton/Franconia CCs/SBs could arrange a joint talk by Doug about dark skies. General agreement that is a good idea. Michelle suggests inviting town of Lincoln because of their light issues. General discussion that ACT education committee could be part of having Doug Arion give a talk.

Road Salt: Julie mentions that Mike Kenney of Easton CC raised concerns about road salt pollution on Rte 116. Discussion that Rte 116 is a state highway so we don't have any control over that.

Natural Resource Inventory update: Detailed discussion about the 100 page draft document that Elise Lawson posted online the NRI maps she created for us to review. Discussion that 3 FCC members present haven't been able to access Elise's electronic site despite the invitation emails, but 2 members have been able to access. Chris will ask Elise to reinvite us electronically, and suggests those of us without access also reach out separately to her. Chris says there are some things in draft that need clarification. He sent us Elise's draft. Chris will communicate our suggestions to her.

Discussion of some page by page questions: dedication, FCC roster spellings, other spelling details. Ginny has a few minor details to clarify which she will email to Chris. Chris says Elise is contracted to have an educational event late winter or early spring to the public to present the NRI. Steve says some PB members should be there.

Ginny points out on page 7 that "fungi" should be added to the carbon sequestration paragraph because it isn't just plants doing it. Chris says that importance of upland border to wetlands needs added in that part too. Ginny suggests adding "currently" to the section about our existing conserved lands because state and national forests aren't legally perpetually conserved. Steve thinks some of these NRI recommendations need to be considered by the planning board in light of zoning ordinances that are being updated right now. He will bring the NRI draft to that zoning subcommittee, which he is on. Chris wants clarification about how to access her maps in the more distant future. Steve will connect Tara Bamford with Elise, since Elise has pulled in multiple data sources to do her wetlands map and Tara has also done wetlands maps for the PB: PB zoning subcommittee is currently working with that. Ginny will be working on uploading more of her observation photos to the NRI i-Nat project. Discussion that we want clarification on the quantity of floodplain forest because Elise listed it as only 5 acres. Discussion that we would like the rapidly spreading beech leaf nematode infection mentioned because rapidly killing beech trees throughout the NE. Chris will be sending her his suggestion about how the "rivers and lakes" section be addressed. Chris thinks the AMC huts should be mentioned as cultural resource. Chris and Ginny discussion the differences between Shoreland Protection Act of Gale R, and the special protected designation of the Ammonoosuc River. Ginny thinks Shoreland PA is federal, and the commission that Rick Walling is on that protects the Ammonoosuc is a state special protection. Chris will ask Rick for information. General discussion of the error of Tuckerbrook and Meadowbrook, and a couple watersheds on the USGS maps conventions. It also affects naming of one of the photos page 41. Chris mentions about the aquifer section of the draft: that the when USGS measured aquifers they didn't look at the WMNF at all, because that was Dept of Ag. If it had been measured it would change the percentages listed. Chris mentions that her invasive plant section doesn't include all the local invasives we listed on our updated master plan section, so he is sending her that. Ginny says that Elise's NH references about invasives control are outdated, such as the repeated cutting of Japanese knotweed, which has been shown by Penn State and others to increase its spread. Only smothering or

spraying works. Chris notes that the policy section might include collaboration with Bethlehem since the towns both include the Gale R. Steve would like her report to include the trends compared to the 2007 NRI. Steve suggests there be a section about light pollution and dark skies. And Michelle mentions sound pollution such as the interstate. Chris requests we email any additional suggestions to him to compile for her.

Other business: Ginny recommends the NHACC annual education conference on Nov 2. Last year the education topics were excellent; and it is an opportunity to network with and learn from other CCs. Chris says Linda Hansen of Easton is now on their board of directors.

Next meeting: Tuesday, December 3, 2024, 3 pm.

Minutes by Ginny Jeffryes