

Franconia Conservation Commission (FCC)

Meeting: December 3, 2024, 3 pm

Members present: Chris Nicodemus, Ginny Jeffryes, Julie Weisman, Jill Brewer

McKenzie Woods conservation easement logging issue: Chris: Lot 22.4 owned by Presby now instead of Delaneys. Recent logging there encroached onto our easement in 6 places. Chris describes location, shows map with his GIS pins. Some encroachments are larger than others. Our easement permits forestry, but any logging on easement is supposed to be done according to a forestry management plan. There is no such plan. Presby did not notify us. The trails in that area – Skid Row and a couple others in the lower upland area are mostly obliterated – some damage by blowdown and some by the logging. Evidence of 5 or 6 large white pines removed from our easement.

ACT had been doing logging nearby on their property earlier in year, and ACT's logger was also doing some work for abutting landowners. Presbys didn't use the same logger. Their logger came in as ACT's was finishing, and continued to log later in the summer. Per his discussions with ACT, this constitutes a "minor infraction" of FCC's easement, not a major infraction, because forestry is permitted, but the appropriate process involving us wasn't done. We need to notify Presbys. The trails group community is unhappy about their trail damage but they don't have recourse. The Prelude trail has been cleaned up and reopened however. As far as Chris knows, the Presbys don't have current development plans of the parcel. Julie suggests sending Presbys a letter notifying them of the infraction and requesting that we work together in the future. Chris agrees it should be a formal letter from us; and that we inform them that we should have a forestry plan for any future logging and that the Town and the FCC be notified of any future logging; and that the letter inquire if the job is fully done, or whether future cleanup on our easement is planned. Chris recommends that we find time to walk it individually. Ginny says that that area is a boundary on which we posted our updated Conservation easement placards at regular intervals a few winters ago. Chris took a photo of one of the older versions of the placards visible on a downed tree, possibly a blowdown, but visible in the logging incursion. Chris doesn't remember the logger's name but thinks it is the same one who encroached on our easement near Middle Earth a couple years ago. And there's another encroachment that has a visible marker.

Chris requests a motion for him to draft a letter to Presbys. Julie moves that FCC authorize Chris to write an letter addressing the easement infractions. Jill seconds. Unanimous vote in favor.

Julie asks Chris to describe the ACT logging this year in that area, and whether the other private properties logged or cleaned up by ACT's logger was done in concert with the forester. He described, and said a lot of it was the heavy blowdown clean up, plus some was timber harvest to cover costs.

Delage Farm Road maintenance: Info only: Chris says town requested a DES wetlands permit but was denied, and needs to resubmit.

Easton Rd Presby propane facility wetlands permit near the transfer station: Ginny says she saw on DES website that DES approved it in July. We had objected to it in May via letter. We weren't notified when it was approved.

Town Forest ACT Easement: Legal opinion by town lawyer came back, and suggested FCC's change suggestions were too restrictive. Now it is back in the Select Board's hands to decide what language to send back to ACT.

Fox Hill Park - Society for Protection of NH Forests easement boundary: No further SB action thus far. Chris says it would need to be a SB budget item if the missing pins area needed to be resurveyed.

Unknown how much it would cost, but Chris thinks it would be likely a few thousand dollars since some pins are present. Discussion about whether the Conservation Fund could be used. General agreement that we probably could legally. But the SB would need to determine the process. Jill will confirm with Libby whether it's an option from existing land use Conservation Fund. Bids needed. FCC would need to vote on the expenditure after details available.

McFarland-Johnson company I-93 improvements: Chris says they are going to be doing improvements along I-93 from the Notch to Littleton involving some wetlands, so they gave us notice.

Conservation talk by Mt Wash Observatory extreme weather w/Easton and Sugar Hill: rescheduled for December 9<sup>th</sup> 6 pm in Sugar Hill. We are cosponsoring per previous vote.

Budget: Jill says they discussed at SB last night, and SB is proposing same as last year: \$1500. Last year we spent \$6762, but that included \$5,512 withdrawn from the land use Conservation Fund.

Dark Skies/lights downtown: No new information.

Town conservation properties: Discussion of whether the list in the NRI draft is correct in terms of matching our PB list. Ginny thinks it is, and thinks if there's an acreage discrepancy it's likely due to Fobes Farm, which has some easement land in Sugar Hill and some in Franconia.

NRI draft: Chris says Elise Lawson sent back her updated draft today which incorporated our previous suggestions, and he emailed to us. He would like us to look at it and get back to him with any concerns. Not sure when her late winter or early spring community presentation will be yet.

FCC annual report: Chris is working on rough draft it because due to Libby end of January.

Other business: Ginny mentions as an FYI: the 400+ acre parcel on S and W side of Lafayette Brook - E side of Rte 18 – which approx 5 years ago became owned by Franconia Notch State Park - has a plan to be logged this winter – approx 50 or 55 patch cuts. Michelle forwarded an email with the details. Ginny will send it along. General discussion of possible impacts on Lafayette Brook, old trees, and how loggers may access it.

Next meeting: Late January, TBD, maybe Jan 21 or Jan 28 if a Tues. Chris will check town calendar.

Minutes by Ginny Jeffryes