Franconia Conservation Commission (FCC)

Meeting: July 28, 2020

Members present: Mary Grote, Ginny Jeffryes, Chris Nicodemus, Red McCarthy, Art Daily; and Jill Brewer by phone

Guest: Rick Walling, Conservation Project Manager for ACT; Rebecca Brown of ACT joined via phone.

Old minutes: Art makes motion to approve minutes of 2-17-2020, Chris seconds. All vote in favor.

Van Pelt property conservation project: Art received an email today from Rebecca Brown with ACT saying things are moving along. Art thinks the 10 acre property may be overvalued by ACT’s assessor at $135,000. Chris says the Lands Committee of ACT met yesterday and reviewed it from a project criteria standpoint, and they tend to agree. There are more steps to take with nearby landowner partners. ACT wants a token financial support from the FCC. The Lands Committee has recommended to the ACT Board of Trustees to consider proceeding with the project. Chris notes that there are other potential conservation parcels with existing landowners to preserve Franconia recreation trails.

Rebecca joins by phone now. Reports ACT would acquire the land, and focus on the trail and the trail system, and its value as an access point with small parking lot potential so people could get on the trails. The acquisition process would be to make an offer first. The appraisal is lower than the owner’s asking price. ACT would then seek funding for a parking area: perhaps a grant, Moose Plate conservation funds, help from the mountain biking group. It is a smaller parcel than what they usually purchase – it scores high for recreation but not so high for their environmental conservation mission. Since funds will be in part from neighbor donors, they have to be cautious to get support from various other community partners. ACT would keep the property on the tax rolls, pay insurance, and pay for maintenance. There is no income potential from the property, so they need a stewardship fund. They would be requesting perhaps a suggested minimum $5000 from the FCC to show interest.

Ginny moves that FCC express support for ACT’s moving forward in acquiring this conservation land of the Van Pelt project along Wells Road. Red seconds. Art recuses himself. Motion passes unanimously.

Ground water management issue. Chris had suggested to the Road Agent that runoff from Sunset Lane not go from the culvert directly into the stream, but into a catchment first. The Franconia highway department cleared all the vegetation along there, including wetlands to the unnamed stream that eventually flows into the Gale across the iron furnace. They dug an area which now becomes a pond with event runoff. Red looked at the area. The town didn’t get a Permit or do a DES notification for the culvert (nor for one on Bickford Hill.) The Road Agent didn’t get a permit for digging the catchment pond they created on Sunset Lane, and he dug up an area of wetlands to the stream to ditch. Ginny recommends that the FCC recommend to the SB that they discuss with the Road Agent the need to notify DES anytime doing work relating to water. Discussion – general agreement. Jill will take this recommendation to the SB.

Next meeting: TBD

Minutes by Ginny Jeffryes