

DEERFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

1967 - FIFTY YEARS AND COUNTING - 2017

Meeting Minutes – January 11, 2021

Roll Call Attendance: Brian Adams, Haley Andreozzi, Erick Berglund, Serita Frey, Wes Golomb
Members Absent: None
Visitors & Guests: Rue Teal

Pursuant to Governor Sununu's *Emergency Order #12*, the Deerfield Conservation Commission met electronically and did not provide a physical location for the public to attend. In order to provide access to the public, a conference phone line and meeting ID number were established and posted in the official Meeting Notice.

PHONE NUMBER: 312-626-6799 Meeting ID: 634 101 4902

Serita Frey opened the meeting at 7:05 pm.

Finance: The unofficial *statement* balance in the Conservation Fund at the end of December was \$256,269.27 including interest of \$43.40. Total 2020 interest was \$550.11. The 50% portion of Land Use Change Tax posted to the Conservation Fund in 2020 was \$71,090. A small, yet to be determined amount left over from the 2020 operating budget will be moved to the Conservation Fund as allowed by RSA.

Approval of Minutes: Serita Frey moved to approve the minutes of the December meeting. The motion was seconded by Haley Andreozzi. Brian Adams, Haley Andreozzi, Erick Berglund, Wes Golomb and Serita Frey voted by roll call vote to accept the minutes as written

Lindsay-Flanders:

Reports from multiple site visits this fall revealed evidence of significant damage from rampant ATV use and safety violations from target shooting and campfires. Deerfield Police spoke with two abutters but determined that neither were gunowners. One of the abutters recalled hearing gunfire. The case has been deemed "dormant" pending further information. Although Deerfield Police offered to place a game camera on the property, one was not immediately available. Members agreed that rather than wait, the DCC should purchase and install one or more cameras.

Serita Frey moved to purchase two game cameras at a total cost not to exceed \$250. Erick Berglund seconded the motion. Brian Adams, Haley Andreozzi, Erick Berglund, Wes Golomb and Serita Frey voted by roll call vote in favor of the motion. Brian Adams offered to make the purchase.

Rue Teal reported that Bear-Paw previously reached out to NH Fish and Game about the problem; however, the agency has been swamped with similar reports due to increased ATV activity during Covid-19. Ms. Teal suggested a kiosk with trail maps, and signs stating allowed and prohibited uses at entry points. Although not a solution in and of itself, **posting would provide evidence of DCC exercising due diligence, promote accountability, eliminate deniability, and serve as evidence when pressing charges.**

It was suggested that a few signs be ordered initially to keep costs down, and that generic signs with broader wording could be used on other properties. Small **"NO ATV" signs can be purchased inexpensively on line** and would be appropriate at multiple locations. Serita Frey recalled that **DCC has an existing supply of 4-inch plastic conservation tags that could be posted at Lindsay-Flanders** until alternative signs are acquired. **Mr. Berglund will ask Mr. Perkins to install the tags.** In addition to the examples provided by Alan Perkins, Ms. Frey will photograph the signs used by Southeast Land Trust. **Chair Frey will present the results of her sign research for approval at the February meeting.** Repairs to breaches in the walls should wait until posting is complete.

Mr. Berglund suggested getting an opinion from Attorney Raymond as to whether conservation funds can be used for these purchases for *care of the land*. **Haley Andreozzi offered to solicit an opinion from Barbara Richter of the NH Association of Conservation Commissions (NHACC).**

Rue Teal stressed the importance of public outreach; possibly a blog, a shared site with the current Trails Committee, a DCC-only Facebook page, or other means of communication, to enlist the public's help in encouraging appropriate behavior and use of Town lands. Ms. Teal also suggested re-introducing the Town's forests and conservation areas to residents by publishing monthly articles or posting on social media. **Wes Golomb offered to coordinate posting photographs of various conservation parcels** if the members would come up with an idea each month. Ms. Andreozzi would consider being named the page's administrator. DCC could also enlist the assistance of a volunteer.

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Serita Frey received an email from a well-intentioned resident who unknowingly cleared and blazed a trail route that Bear-Paw had previously approved, but subsequently decided to relocate, when it was deemed to be too close to the property line of an occupied dwelling. Although volunteers are always welcome, they are encouraged to contact the DCC before independently undertaking trail-clearing or similar activities.

Stewardship/Easement Monitoring:

Serita Frey will reach out to Alden Dill (Folger & Irene Shores CE) and Paula Duchano (Curry CE) and report back in February. The Merrill easement (Kay Williams CE) was monitored in 2019 and should be reviewed in the next year.

Sylvia von Aulock will need to provide clarity to her inquiry about DCC's willingness to oversee open space areas created as a condition of an open space subdivision. Management of the open space elements in both the Cottonwood Estates and Brown's Mill/Corey Wildlife easement areas have proven to be logistically complicated, especially if the subdivision lacks an active homeowners' association. Oversight by a land trust was suggested as an alternative to Town ownership and DCC taking on the responsibility of policing these areas.

Easements and Land Protection:

Marston 128-Acre LCIP Parcel – CE & Town Forest Warrant Article:

The final wording of the 2021 warrant article was reviewed by Attorney Raymond and sent to John Harrington on 12/18/2020. **Serita Frey will draft the explanatory information to be printed below the warrant article and in the Voters' Guide which are due before the end of January.** Residents need to be informed that the additional easement is required to complete the agreement for LCHIP funding of the project as a whole, which will result in a reimbursement to the conservation fund of \$50,000. **Town Forest status under RSA 312:111 (see excerpt below) will also be conveyed** with passage of the warrant article. A link to a *FORUM* educational piece will be placed on the Town Facebook page closer to the date of the **deliberative session scheduled for January 30th 2021.**

***31:111 Purpose.** – The main purpose of such city or town forest shall be to encourage the proper management of timber, firewood and other natural resources through planting, timber stand improvement, thinning, harvesting, reforestation, and other multiple use programs consistent with the forest management program, any deed restrictions and any pertinent local ordinances or regulations.*

Wetlands Zoning:

It is DCC's understanding that the Planning Board is not intending to place a revision to the 2020 zoning amendment on the ballot in 2021.

2020 Annual Report to the Town:

Members suggested revisions to the draft of the Town report which is due January 18th. *Horseback Riding* and *Target Shooting* were added to the list of *Not Permitted Uses*.

A copy of the DCC 2020 Annual Report to the Town is attached below as an addendum to these minutes

Membership Renewals: Tabled till February.

Regulated Wetlands & Shorelands:

DCC Review #2020-04

DES File# 2020-02418

No additional updates were available for this review. The clerk will contact David Price at NHDES to determine the status of this file.

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Announcements:

Petitioned Warrant Article – Renewable Energy Installations

Wes Golomb informed members that there will be a petitioned warrant article on the ballot, asking if the Town will vote to exempt certain renewable energy installations from local property taxes. Towns are permitted by the State to adopt this exemption (see excerpt below). Additional information can be found at: <https://www.nh.gov/osi/energy/saving-energy/incentives.htm>

Renewable Energy Property Tax Exemption: [RSA 72:61-72](#) permits cities and towns to offer exemptions from local property taxes for certain renewable energy installations. These include solar systems (thermal and photovoltaic), wind turbines, and central wood-fired heating systems. Woodstoves and fireplaces are not included. The goal of the exemption is to create a **tax neutral policy within a municipality that neither increases an individual's property tax, nor decreases the municipality's property tax revenues**. By implementing it as a tax neutral policy, homeowners do not have a disincentive of higher property taxes for installing a renewable energy system, and since there is no net reduction in municipal tax revenues, other taxpayers in a municipality are not affected.

Video- legal basis for proposal
<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=yZX-dmdXVBg>

Video - Documented economic benefits of renewable energy on Deerfield.
<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=8AeYwNLBFaA>

Bear-Paw Annual Meeting

WHEN: Saturday, January 23rd from 4:00 - 6:00 pm

This event will be held via Zoom;
Sign up at <http://www.bear-paw.org/>

Dr. Camila Gomez with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology will be joining us via Zoom to give a special talk on how our local conservation efforts can have a global impact. Dr. Gomez will discuss how the birds she researches in the Columbian rain forests connect to our conserved lands in New Hampshire and beyond.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 12, 2021

(Please check the website townofdeerfieldnh.com for scheduling changes)

These minutes were prepared and submitted by Judy Marshall. Revisions, if any, will be contained in the minutes of the next meeting and posted to the Town website, after approval by the Deerfield Conservation Commission

Deerfield Conservation Commission 2020 Annual Report

The Deerfield Conservation Commission is a volunteer, seven-member commission, appointed for three-year terms by the Board of Selectmen. State Law RSA 36-A calls for the establishment of conservation commissions for the “*proper utilization and protection of natural resources and the protection of watershed resources.*” The commission may also, with approval by the Select Board, acquire and manage land as conservation areas or town forests. In a nutshell, conservation commissions:

- Research and document the town’s natural resources
- Develop long-term plans and strategies for the protection of important places
- Work to permanently protect the most ecologically valuable lands
- Provide educational programs and hikes
- Work with the Forestry Commission to manage town lands for timber production, recreation and wildlife
- Advise other boards on the importance of the town’s natural resources
- Provide comment on wetland permits to the NH Department of Environmental Services
- Comment and make recommendations on land use plans submitted to the Planning Board

LAND CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION

Conservation land in Deerfield includes both privately-owned and Town-owned land protected by conservation easements granted to qualified land trusts such as the Society for the Protection of NH Forests, Bear-Paw Regional Greenways, the Southeast Land Trust of NH, Rockingham County Conservation District, the USDA Wetland Reserve Program, and others.

The DCC encourages both the donation of land and of conservation easements as a means of preserving Deerfield’s forests and fields, its rivers and streams, wetlands and wildlife. Over the years, with the strong support of Town residents, and the generosity of private landowners DCC has facilitated the acquisition of properties that enhance and support the Town’s conservation goals.

Guided by criteria contained in the Deerfield Open Space Plan (DOSP) of Deerfield’s Master Plan, and the NH Wildlife Action Plan, open space protection focuses on properties that are rich in high quality conservation values including a parcel’s location within Deerfield’s green infrastructure, the existence of important soils, its proximity and contribution to the protection of wetlands, streams, surface waters, lakes and wildlife habitats (including wildlife corridors) and its role in connecting large, unfragmented ecologically sensitive areas.

In addition to numerous privately-owned conserved parcels, there are currently 996 acres of town-owned parcels in Deerfield that are permanently protected by conservation easements.

▪ Arthur Chase Town Forest	Tax Map 414 Lot 73	40 Acres
▪ Edythe H. Boisvert Town Forest	Tax Map 404 Lot 2	185 Acres
▪ Freese Town Forest	Tax Map 410 Lot 32	178 Acres
▪ Dowst-Cate Town Forest & Park	Tax Map 416 Lot 16	100 Acres
▪ Hart Town Forest	Tax Map 403 Lot 2	71 Acres
▪ Lindsay-Flanders Conservation Area	Tax Map 415 Lot 30	58 Acres
▪ Marston/Pendleton Conservation Area	Tax Map 409 Lot 54	128 Acres
▪ McNeil Conservation Area	Tax Map 406 Lot 12	63 Acres
▪ Weiss Town Forest	Tax Map 416 Lot 18	93 Acres
▪ Wells Town Forest	Tax Map 411 Lot 39	80 Acres

Visitors are encouraged to freely roam Deerfield’s conservation areas but are reminded that only non-motorized access is allowed. Carry in – Carry out. Below are permitted and not-permitted activities.

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<u>Permitted Uses</u>	<u>Not Permitted Uses</u>
Non-motorized activities, including:	Motorized vehicle use, including:
Walking, hiking, trail running	ATV use, snowmobiling,
Cross country skiing	dirt biking, mud trucking
Snowshoeing	Mountain biking
Wildlife observation	Fires or firewood collection
Orienteering	Horseback riding
Photography	Camping, large group games
Dog walking – leash and scoop	Target Shooting

Funding for conservation projects comes from a mix of sources including donations, grants, and the Conservation Fund. The Conservation Fund is a major funding tool of the Conservation Commission for carrying out its mission to protect Deerfield open space. The Conservation Fund is supported by Land Use Change Tax (LUCT) revenues which are paid to the Town by landowners when properties are removed from current use status. Per the Town vote on March 14, 2006, 50% of the LUCT revenues are transferred to the Conservation Fund. Conservation Fund monies are routinely supplemented by donations and grants, such as those from the Land & Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP).

A joint effort between DCC, Bear-Paw, LCHIP and the NH State Attorney General's Office finalized the deed language for the easement to be conveyed on the 128-acre parcel donated to the Town by Gile Beye in 2018. Passage of a 2021 warrant article to convey an easement on the Marston parcel in Great Brook will result in the Town being reimbursed \$50,000 by LCHIP. The warrant article will also ask the Town to officially designate the parcel a Town Forest under RSA 31:111.

STEWARDSHIP

Annual monitoring of Deerfield's Town Forests and conservation areas ensures that they comply with the terms of their respective easements. This year, DCC members consulted with NH Fish & Game to formulate stewardship plans for the Corey Wildlife Open Space Subdivision (Browns Mill CE) Map 411 Lot 45-13. The Conservation Commission also responds to resident reports of wetland disturbances, safety issues, unauthorized cutting, dumping, and ATV activity on conservation parcels and in wetland areas. Particular attention over the past year has once again focused on renewed reports of ATV use, target shooting, and other violations taking place on the trails of the Lindsay-Flanders Conservation Area.

PARTNERSHIPS AND OUTREACH

DCC strives to address the concerns of residents and organizations that have come to the Commission for advice and support. In addition, the DCC continues to partner with the Town's Boards and Commissions and with local and State organizations such as NH Fish & Game, NH Department of Environmental Services, Pleasant Lake Preservation Association, Lamprey River Watershed Association and Advisory Committee, the Southern NH Planning Commission and Bear-Paw Regional Greenways. This past year, revisions to the Deerfield Zoning Ordinance Section 210 – Wetlands Conservation District, the result of a year-long partnership with the Deerfield Planning Board, won the approval of the Town on Voting Day in March 2020.

The DCC meets on the second Monday of each month at 7 pm at the GB White building and interested citizens are always welcome to attend the meetings.

Deerfield Conservation Commission
Serita Frey, Chair