

City of Claremont
Conservation Commission Meeting
Thursday, March 20, 2014
City Hall, Council Chambers

Meeting Minutes
APPROVED 4/17/2014

Call to Order

Chairperson Wood called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM.

I. Roll Call

Members Present: Chairperson Wood, Vice-Chairperson Dianne Harlow, Gary Dickerman, Cortney Nichols

Members Absent: Nicholas Koloski

City Staff: deForest Bearse, Resource Coordinator

II. Review of Minutes

a. February 20, 2014

Corrections as follow:

- Correct the spelling of Mrs. Harlow's name (Dianne, not Diane) in the roll call
- Change the & to \$ in the second sentence of the finance report
- Clarify that Attorney Adams was speaking as a private citizen and not an attorney for the Commission
- Change "date" to "data" in paragraph 4 on page 2
- Change "Coats" to "Coates" in item d of Communications
- Clarify that Ms. Nichols was following up on Mr. Woods' suggestion for a walk in Moody Park and not making the original suggestion.

Motion: to approve the minutes of February 20, 2014 with the above corrections

Made by: Mrs. Harlow

Second:

Mr. Dickerman

Vote: Unanimous

III. Finance Report

There was no finance report.

IV. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

V. Old Business

1. Discussion of immediately addressable "to-do" items from the list of Potential Improvements on the Bobby Woodman Rail Trail (will include participation by Nate Miller, Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission)

Nate Miller of UVLSRPC asked the Commission if it had prioritized the list of potential improvements that could be made now, notwithstanding the unresolved user question. Chairman Wood had asked Planning and Development Director Nancy Merrill to invite key city staff to attend this meeting to make these decisions. Parks and Rec Director, Mark Brislin, and Police Chief, Alex Scott, were at the meeting.

It was unclear whether or not city staff had copies of the map and summary list of possible improvements.

Mark Brislin said he was not prepared to speak this evening. Mr. Wood asked Mr. Brislin if all of the Bobby Woodman trail signs had been erected. Mr. Brislin said he would look into it.

Mr. Miller offered his thoughts.

- The crossing at Broad and Chestnut Streets should be done as soon as spring arrives (striping, warning signs, etc.)
- Substantial trail surface improvements should not be undertaken until the final decision is made on who the users will be.
- The parking area at the east end of the trail should be examined in terms of how it could be expanded and how amenities could be added to it (canoe/kayak/car-top boat launch, etc.)
- Collect speed data
- Drainage issues in the section of the trail from east of Pleasant Street to Chestnut Street. This is a costlier project, but one that could be offset by grants.
- Encroachment issues should be addressed.
- The formal crossing at Sam's Gas Station – the property there is coming up for re-development, which may present an opportunity to make crossing improvements.

All agreed that the safety issues were the most important.

Chief Scott addressed funding types and their affect on the users of the trail. He said he spent some time looking into it. He was unable to clarify the issue based on the research he had done thus far. He said he would try to look at the original file in Concord. It was his opinion that there are ways to accommodate all users of the trail.

Chris Irish shared his experiences with this issue as both a city councilor and a conservation commissioner. He said that this issue has been resolved twice already. It is his opinion that the City Council has decided twice already that the trail is a "multi-use trail".

The Commission is still hoping to see documentation to prove that the trail is indeed a "multi-use trail".

Both Mr. Irish and Chief Scott asserted that the Council has repeatedly decided in favor of ATV use on the trail. Chief Scott stated that this is a policy discussion that takes place with the Council every year.

Chairman Wood asked the audience for input on the list of improvements offered by Mr. Miller.

Mrs. Harlow asked about the condition of bridge that goes over the Sugar River by Reeds. Audience members assured the Commission that the bridge had been repaired within the last 3-5 years. There are plans to check its condition this year and put in some fencing near American Plate Glass.

ATV and snowmobile permission ends at the turn-off at the Community Center. From the turn-off at the Community Center back to Pleasant Street we should look at working on the surface. Doing to the Chestnut to the Sugar River section what was done a few years ago to the Pleasant to Broad Street section is another possibility – i.e. go through and really clean out the vegetation, trim up the trees and open it up. A little was done last fall, but more work needs to be done.

John Lucas, member of ATV Club, spoke about how the ATV Club and the Snowmobile Club work together to maintain the trail.

Steven Wilke from Cornish offered his support for use of the trail by ATVs. The conflicts only arise when alcohol or private property are involved. If ATV and snowmobile users are banned from the trail, they will start using the woods instead which could cause more problems.

The revenue raised by out-of-state trail users was also offered as support for motorized vehicles.

Mrs. Harlow read an email from an out-of-state trail user in support of motorized vehicles based on the maintenance work the clubs provide and the revenue that is raised for the City.

Chairman Wood stated that the Conservation Commission is not trying to limit users of the trail. The Commission is trying to implement safety improvements and involve as many users as possible in making these improvements. But they are reluctant to go too far in making changes until there is definitive evidence that it is a multi-use trail. Chairman Wood acknowledged complaints that have been received, but he is convinced that if enough people use the trail responsibly it would discourage the small percentage of users who do not.

Mrs. Harlow stated that excluding some people from the trail runs counter to Bobby Woodman's vision for the trail.

If the snowmobile and ATV clubs are barred from the trail, then the City will bear the full responsibility for maintaining it.

Chief Scott stated that the legislature requires that ATV and snowmobile users obtain permission from City Council every year, because these machines by far cause the most damage to the trail. It is policy question that will continue to be discussed every year.

The consensus of the Commission was to pursue the list of improvements enumerated by Mr. Miller.

2. Update on legal status of OHRV use on Rail Trail.

No update was available as Mr. Koloski was unable to attend the meeting.

3. Update on advertising/publicizing Conservation Camp sponsorships for 2014

The distribution and collection of applications was formerly done by Katrina Spaulding, who is no longer working for the City. So the Commission must create an alternative system. A new letter/application will have to be created for this year. Perhaps an older version is available at Planning & Development?

The Sportsman's Club and the Conservation Commission both sponsor campers and will strive to work together on this.

In the past, the letter was handed out to the kids at the schools (ages 7-14).

Ms. Nichols will send an older version of the letter to Mrs. Harlow, who will update it and get it to the schools (perhaps via the SAU?). It will also be posted at the Community Center and published on the E-ticker, the Eagle, and aired on CCTV.

Chairman Wood would also like it to be a requirement (and so stated in the letter) that the camper either give a report to the Commission at a meeting or in a written report.

4. Consideration of our membership renewal in the NH Association of Conservation Commissions

The dues (\$346) are not actually due until next month. The benefit of membership was questioned by all. It was decided to wait until next meeting.

V. New Business

1. Discussion of Arrowhead retention pond

Chuck Allen wants to clear some of the vegetation from the edge of the parking lot to increase parking space in what may be a former retention pond. Chairman Wood remembers the Soil Conservation Service assisting in the design and construction of the pond to control or accommodate spring runoff along Easter Way. The Commission will invite Chuck to the next meeting and look into it more in the interim.

VI. Communications

1. *Saving Special Places* 2014 Land Conservation Conference, Saturday, April 5, 2014

March 28th is the deadline to register at a reduced rate.

VII. Other

Mrs. Harlow asked about setting a date for Green-Up Day. The Commission will broach the subject with the City Council. The trails open May 23rd, so clean-up should be close to that date, e.g. the first weekend in June.

Ms. Nichols reminded the Commission of the idea of a walk at Moody Park. Chairman Wood felt that a spring event might be best. The consulting forester, Dennis McKenney, should be invited to participate. All agreed it would be good exposure for the Commission.

VII. Adjournment

Motion: to adjourn the meeting

Made by: Mrs. Harlow

Second: Ms. Nichols

Vote: Unanimous

The meeting adjourned at 7:57 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
deForest Bearse