

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

Meeting Minutes
APPROVED 3/20/2014

Call to Order

Chairperson Wood called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM.
Mr. Wood made some additions to the agenda.

I. Roll Call

Members present: Chairperson Steve Wood, Vice-Chairperson Dianne Harlow, Gary Dickerman, Cortney Nichols, Nick Koloski.

Members Absent : None.

City Staff: deForest Bearse, Minute-taker

II. Review of Minutes

a. January 16, 2014 meeting:

Correction to item #1 under “Updates on the Forestry Plan” – change “?” to “Cathole West”.

Motion: to approve the minutes of the January 16, 2014 meeting with correction.

Made by: Mr. Koloski **Second:** Mrs. Harlow **Vote:** Unanimous

III. Finance Report

The 2013 and 2014 financial reports were reviewed. No expenses have been incurred in 2014 to date. There is \$18,718.61 in the checking account.

IV. Old Business

Nate Miller, UVLSRPC – Rail Trail Project

Attorney Arthur Adams, a private property owner on Chestnut Street, spoke at length to the Commission regarding his concerns about the legality of allowing motorized vehicles to use the rail trail. Mr. Adams was speaking as a private citizen and not as an attorney for the Commission. Attorney Adams asserted that the Federal funding for the project carried with it the stipulation that motorized, wheeled vehicles would not be allowed on the trail and that allowing them to do so puts the city in a tenuous legal situation. He said that the city runs the risk of having to pay the money back to the Federal government (with interest). He stated that if someone were to get seriously hurt on the trail (for example as a result of an accident between a pedestrian and a motorized vehicle) that the city would be liable.

Attorney Adams went on to enumerate other concerns he has with the trail usage, including driving by under-age children, excessive speeds of the

vehicles and property damages he has sustained (the Adams property abuts the trail on Chestnut Street).

Attorney Adams asserted that the City must apply for an exemption if they wish to continue allowing motorized vehicles on the trail, a process he stated that is “exhaustive”.

Mr. Feleen stated that to his knowledge, an exemption has not been sought by the city.

Chairman Wood stated that development of the master plan for the trail will hinge on the resolution of this issue.

Nate Miller of the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission presented an aerial map of the trail and spoke at length of various proposed improvements to the trail. Mr. Miller stated that the city and the Federal Department of Transportation are working on the legal issues. He went to state that there are many improvements that can be made to the trail regardless of the motorized/nonmotorized vehicle debate including signage, drainage, speed limits, right-of-way boundary issues, crossings, and bridge repairs. Mr. Miller said that speed data should be collected; that an origin/destination survey should be conducted, and an analysis of the economic impact of the trail on the city and its businesses should be performed.

Mr. Miller suggested that the Commission consider holding a second public forum to determine if there are any other major needs that should be addressed in the plan, to prioritize tasks, and to identify funding sources. The Commission, however, was reluctant to move forward with a second forum until the legal issues had been resolved. They felt that the Commission needed to meet with city staff to discuss the proposed improvements, perhaps Planning and Development Director Nancy Merrill and Public Works Director Bruce Temple. The meeting was tentatively set for March 20.

V. New Business

a. Barry Conservation Camp (Continued discussion)

There was lengthy discussion regarding feedback from sponsored campers. The consensus was that the application should include a requirement for some form of communication from campers – either in person at a meeting of the Commission or as a written essay.

Also discussed was the number of campers that the Commission wanted to sponsor this year. Previously the Commission has spent \$2200 and sponsored five campers. Everyone agreed to continue this practice.

The Commission also discussed advertising the program better, camper eligibility, getting applications out to students, and collection of completed applications.

VI. Communications

- a. The Source – Newsletter of the NHDES Drinking Water Source Protection Program, Winter 2014
- b. Membership Invitation to NH Association of Natural Resource Scientists
- c. “Saving Special Places” 2014 Land Conservation Conference, Saturday, April 5, Laconia, NH Middle School
- d. Letter from NH Association of Conservations’ new Executive Director, Nik Coates (with reminder of \$346 annual dues)

VII. Other Business

a. Planning Board liaison

All agreed that having a Planning Board member on the Commission is a good idea. Chairman Wood said he would contact the Planning Board chair to discuss having someone serve in this capacity.

b. Public Comment

Mr. Dickerman asked if the Commission could add a “Public Comment” item to the regular meeting agenda. The Commission agreed that this was a good idea and that it should be inserted right after the “Finance Report” and before “Old Business”.

- c. Ms. Nichols pointed out that the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions’ website has a place for local commissions to post their contact information. All agreed that it would be a good idea to put the Claremont Conservation Commission information there.

- d. Ms. Nichols said she had followed up on Mr. Woods’ suggestion that the Commission host a walk through Moody Park. All agreed that this should be done.

VIII. Adjournment

Motion: to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 PM.

Made by: Mr. Dickerman **Second:** Ms. Nichols **Vote:** Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,
deForest Bearse