



**OFFICE OF THE
CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

TOWN HALL, 511 MAIN STREET
DUNSTABLE, MA 01827-1313
(978) 649-4514 FAX (978) 649-8893
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Conservation Commission Minutes
Monday, March 25, 2024

Approved: **April 22, 2024**

Chair Alan Chaney called the meeting to order at 6:33pm.

Members present: Juan Amodei, Marijan Andacic, Leah Basbanes, Alan Chase and Al Starbird

Members absent: Kate DeLoureiro

Meeting Minutes of March 11, 2023

Leah made a motion to approve the February 26th meeting minutes as presented. Al S. 2nd the motion. – Motion passed unanimously.

Bills/Payroll

Juan made a motion to pay a \$546.00 invoice from Town Counsel, Mirick O’Connell for the title search services related to the Swallow Mill Pond acquisition. Al seconded the motion. – Motion passed unanimously.

Alan Chase made a motion to sign payroll. Al S. 2nd the motion. – Motion passed unanimously.

CPC Application Approval – High Street Conservation Restriction

Alan presented an overview of the proposal to purchase a conservation restriction for a large property of three parcels totaling 53.3 acres on High Street. He detailed its location and proximity to many nearby and abutting conservation and DRLT properties. The property has 280’ of frontage on High Street and could be one conventional lot and two backland lots. The land is under Chapter 61 for forestry currently.

An appraisal has been completed by Hunneman Appraisal & Consulting Services for the owner. The appraisal for two (Parcel B and the frontage lot) of the 3 parcels has come in at \$930,000.00. However, the owner is offering the DCC a bargain price on purchase of a CR on the entire 53.3 acres at \$700,000.00. A LAND Grant application for \$406,000 along with a CPC request for \$294,000 (contingent on the grant being awarded) could secure the property’s conservation restriction.



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The owner would like to be able to split the two rear parcels to two heirs. The state's CR review department needs to be the decision maker on ability to allow this split later. Alan couldn't get an answer on whether this would be allowed at this time given the backup currently. It may require separate CR's on the two rear lots.

The first step for the Commission is to apply to the Community Preservation Committee for funding support. They are meeting next week to review all application submissions. Subsequent steps would be a Town Meeting article for support and a LAND grant application to the Department of Conservation Services.

Leah inquired about whether it was chapter land now. Alan responded it was chapter 61 forestry. She asked whether the heirs could later sell the property. Alan responded yes, but it would retain the CR restriction.

Juan inquired about how rock solid CR's are and whether it could later be sold and repurposed. Alan explained that it's very difficult but not impossible to change the use – but it would require a Town Meeting vote, 2/3rds of the state house passage, as well as conservation land replacement in kind.

Al S. made a motion to apply to the CPC for support of funding the purchase of the High Street Conservation Restriction. Marijan 2nd the motion. – Motion passed unanimously.

Conservation Commission Potential Funding: Potential Timber Sites Visits

Alan, Alan C., and Al S. visited properties together to assess timbering potential on March 22nd.

▪ **Spaulding Proctor Reservation**

Al S. shared his feedback that there is pine which could be cut without being too disruptive to the trails use. There is already a log skid yard present. In the past logging on the property, they left the trailside pines, and it would be the intention to retain such. However, there is a big stretch behind it on the ridge with timber potential of a few hundred trees. Alan reminded the Commission of the deed restrictions for timbering on Spaulding Proctor requiring funds be directed for either maintenance of the property or land purchases along Salmon Brook. He noted that such funds could be used to help support the potential High Street CR purchase.



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▪ **Unkety Woods Preserve**

Al S. noted they didn't see any potential for timbering. There is a ~5-acre younger stand which could use some release work to thin out. Another ~8-acre portion doesn't need cutting currently. It would be another 10-15 years out for timbering that area potentially.

▪ **Farnsworth Wildlife Refuge**

Al S. noted it was harder to assess, as there was a lot more hardwood vs. pines. There are a lot of red oak and if the market is good, it might yield some funding.

Chair Alan will have a forester look at Spaulding Proctor and Farnsworth to provide a more comprehensive assessment to the Commission.

Swallow Mill Pond Grant Award Related

- Awaiting a target closing date from the owner.
- The Commission will target April 13th at 10am for the work party needed to complete elements of the land management plan.
- The Highway department has agreed to put in the replacement culvert and gravel for the parking area.

Open Space and Recreation Plan Status (expires March 2025)

- The administrator shared that the Town Administrator noted that NMCOG can likely help with the plan updates, but he must apply for a grant to secure their services.

Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours in Advance of meeting.

Enforcement Order Status, 285 Pleasant Street

The administrator shared that a new letter requesting status from the owner was sent both certified and regular mail. Leah had sent a note to our DEP's rider but has not heard back. She'll reach out again.



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Leah made a motion to adjourn at 7:43pm. Motion seconded by Alan Chase. – Motion passed unanimously.

The Conservation Commission will meet next Monday, April 8th at 6:30pm, at the town hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol A. Rock
Administrative Assistant
Dunstable Conservation Commission

APPROVED