Cindy Robertson called the public hearing to order at 6:00pm.

Present: Cindy Robertson-Chair, Phil Fitanides-Member, Deborah Miville-Member, Alex Walczyk- Town Council Representative, William Herlicka- Alternate

Not Present: JoCarol Woodburn-Member, David Ross-Vice Chair, Robert Better-Alternate, John Pieroni- Alternate,

Staff: Leann Fuller, Administrative Assistant

Other: Swift Corwin, Calhoun and Corwin Forestry, Steve Couture, Bear-Paw Regional Greenways Consultant

Cindy Robertson began the presentation. Cindy introduced herself, the Conservation Commission members, and Swift Corwin. The Conservation Commission had Moosewood Ecological and Calhoun and Corwin Forestry create the Stewardship plan. The Conservation Commission did review a draft of the Stewardship plan and commented on it. The School Board also had their chance to review the Stewardship plan and comment on it as a piece of property included in the Stewardship Plan is owned by the School District. The Head’s Pond trail is the main portion of what people know about the property. These properties consist of 438 acres between the 4 parcels. The four parcels are known as Carriage Manor, Town Pond, University Heights, and the School District. These properties border Manchester Water Works and Bear-Paw conserved land in Clay Pond. The Clay Pond Conservation Area does connect to Bear Brook State Park.

Swift Corwin introduced himself and what his part of the Stewardship Plan was. Jeff Littleton’s expertise is understanding the ecological systems and Swift’s part is to quantify the forest and the resources. Swift’s process is to study the maps and then walk properties in a grid and take a series of sample points and discover what the species and composition of the forest is and how it is being used. It is a very heavily used area. The trail brings a lot of people in from the Route 3 parking lot. Swift did not study the trail usage but every time he was out there, he encountered a lot of people. The trail is very well designed for that amount of traffic and beautiful especially with the full effect of the pond. There are a number of trails that go up the hill. They are not necessarily walking trails, it is being used by bikers, motorcycles, and four wheelers. The forest itself is a product of historical use. There are not many stone walls and not used as agricultural land. It is an old forest. The last time it was logged was about 30-40 years ago. The soil is not particularly fertile. The trees are healthy and full crowned, but it is not a dynamic forest. There is not a lot of white pine or black oak or species that are in the overstory coming into the understory replacing the forest as it sits but the overstory is perfectly healthy. Given the amount of usage on the property and the way people are walking through it and using it, Swift’s recommendation was to not engage in a lot of active forest management like logging but manage the property for people and the trails. The tradeoff of doing this is that it will influence wildlife because of human traffic and the property. It is a valuable piece of property from a wildlife standpoint. There is also a bare sandy ground which is excellent breeding ground for turtles. Then as you move up the slope, the soils are very well drained which bears a lot of rock and ledge and drains fast. The upland area is primarily black oak and white.
pine and that carries all the way to the west border. The west border is a new housing development. From a
people management standpoint, the primary issue on this piece of property is to develop some rules for use
and to figure out how the land is going to be used.

Cindy Robertson clarified that this would take years. The estimated timeline provided was that in 2022, they
hope to establish trails and trail maps. The goal for the public hearing is to look for input about how the
property should be maintained. There is a strong interest in mountain bike trails in Hooksett. Rules are the
first step. On other Conservation lands, motorized vehicles are not allowed as they cause damage to the land.
That prohibition will continue on this property but again, we are looking for public input.

PUBLIC INPUT:

Comment #1: Four wheeler and motorcycle use has increased, and it has driven away the wildlife. Barriers that
were installed have been broken through.

Comment #2: There was a statement made that this is the largest contiguous property in southern NH. Are
there any similar towns that had this but lost it?

Swift Corwin answered that there used to be larger parcels in Southeastern NH.

Comment #3: Since it is unique, when talking about the land and how the forest isn’t growing back quickly and
a trail is cut, the forest won’t regenerate or recover quickly.

Swift Corwin concurred with that statement. Attention must be paid to the use that will have lasting impacts
on the property.

Mike Horne, Kiwanis: Back when Head’s Pond trail was approved, the grant was under the condition that the
Head’s Pond trail will be non-motorized. That is on the trail itself.

Phil Fitanides, Conservation Commission Member, asked what types of provisions there are for logging?
Swift Corwin is not recommending logging. These properties seem to be more of a recreation area then an
area where logging is appropriate. The forest is going to take care of itself as long as the soil is there. The soil
must be protected.

Comment #5: Fish and Game have concerns about mud holes being expanded.

Comment #6: The tracks from motorized vehicles have become very deep. There is spray paint on rocks all the
time, which is not attractive. It ruins pictures. There is probably Increased shenanigans because of COVID. How
can that be changed?

Cindy Robertson stated that spray paint is a tough subject to control.

Comment #7: A main issue is dogs being leashed.

Cindy Robertson clarified that dogs are required to remain leashed on the trails. Swift also mentioned that it is
 provision on the sign.

Comment #8: Where University Circle is there are barricades but no signage. The sooner the signs go up, the
better.

Mike Horne, Kiwanis: When Kiwanis received the trail rights, the rocks got moved by people. In the woods
trail, the ruts are getting deeper and deeper.
Comment #9: Who polices the area?
Swift Corwin: That is a Hooksett problem.

Comment #10: Who polices the barriers?
Swift Corwin clarified that it is a problem. It is important to develop a policy for the property, how it is going to be used, who is going enforce it and make rules that can be enforced. There should be a group authorized to make those rules.

Comment #11: Doesn’t state law say that you can’t ride any and everywhere?
Cindy Robertson is not an ATV rider and can’t recite the rules, but riders are supposed to know whose land they are on. Swift Corwin added that signs are important. Cindy Robertson would like signs at the School property as there is a lot of activity there. Before signs are installed, policies must be created. Swift Corwin also recommended that property lines are marked. It can be confusing as to whose property it is out there.

Comment #12: Fish and Game have been policing it. They have been trying to catch them.
Cindy Robertson clarified that most of the Conservation Easements do not permit motorized vehicles. The School property is a different story as that is up to them what they want to allow on their property. Swift Corwin recommends a sign saying, “The use of this property is under review, until further notice no motorized vehicles are permitted.”

Comment #13: Quote state law on the signs regarding ATV use.

Comment #14: Is there connectivity to the Bear Brook trails?
Swift Corwin answered that there is a path on the east side of Head’s Pond coming off of route 3, it is a gravel road and then off of that gravel road, there is a trail that goes to the east and goes all the way to Clay Pond area and then connects to bear brook.

Comment #15: Is that ATV accessible?
Steve Couture, Bear-Paw Regional Greenways, answered No. The Town Council agreed that ATV’s are not allowed on Chester Turnpike, State Properties, or Town properties.

Comment #16: Is that all motorized vehicles?
Cindy Robertson clarified that in the Chester Turnpike area, it is referring to ATV’s. Chester Turnpike turns into a Class VI road and it has been closed to ATV’s. Vehicles can drive on Chester Turnpike as it is a road and there are residences out there. The conservation properties do not allow ATV use either.
Swift Corwin clarified that Clay Pond is a lot less intensively used. It is much more remote.
Phil Fitaniides, Conservation Commission member, asked what restrictions there are for logging as that requires motorized vehicles.
Steve Couture clarified that it is a specified allowed activity.

Bill Herlicka, Conservation Commission Alternate, the Merrimack Riverwalk Trail required a plan and was built. However, it never had a plan for mowing and this year, the Town saw the effects of that. Currently, the Conservation Commission is trying to create a plan to understand that aspect of the land. Is there something specifically important that should be looked at? This is a great opportunity to ask that.

Comment #17: What would maintenance involve?
Swift Corwin hopes to avoid a situation where a lot of maintenance is to be done. If the ATV’s stay off the property, maintenance will be minimal. If they remain out there, mediation will have to take place.

Cindy Robertson mentioned that Kiwanis maintains the Head’s Pond trail. Recently, they installed some extra gravel.

Comment #18: Maintenance will be based on the use.
Cindy Robertson stated that the use will drive the maintenance of it. For instance, the Merrimack Riverwalk Trail was mowed on the sides by DPW to keep it wide.

Steve Couture specified that if Mountain Biking is being considered, then the Conservation Commission would have to consider who will create and maintain those trails. They are much different then hiking trails.

Swift Corwin clarified that the New England Mountain Bike Association has a model for trails.

Comment #19: Is hunting allowed?
Cindy Robertson stated that hunting is allowed on Conservation land. The hunter must be licensed through NH Fish and Game, which requires they take a course and follow the rules.

Comment #20: Will the haul road be eliminated?
Cindy Robertson stated no.

Comment #21: There are a lot of trails in there.
Swift Corwin clarified that those are from residents making their own trails.

Comment #22: Make sure it is accessible. There is no need for Mountain biking as Bear Brook has the best trails. Create some accessibility for fishing as it is a good hike to Head’s Pond or out to Dube’s Pond.

Comment #23: How will the School property impact this?
Swift Corwin and Cindy Robertson did present the plan to the School Board. They couldn’t wrap their head around it at the time. The property is useless to them.

Steve Couture clarified that the School property was part of the negotiations with Manchester Sand and Gravel when they were developing the plan for about 400 residential homes and Hooksett was sending children to Manchester. In the easement with Manchester Sand and Gravel, there is specific language for access. Without car access, there is not much that can be done for fishing access. To get to Dube’s Pond from that end, crossing Manchester Sand and Gravel’s property is required and that is prohibited.

Comment #24: The land the School owns is landlocked?
Cindy Robertson stated that initially, when the Conservation Commission began looking at the properties, the School Board’s biggest concern was liability. This property won’t be the exact same, but it will be up to them to decide the policy for their property.

Steve Couture clarified that they may not realize they have a significant liability with ATV’s being on their property.

Comment #25: The best business practices is to stay consistent with all properties.
Swift Corwin mentioned that an action item talked about in the plan is to mark the property lines and come up with the appropriate rules at the trailheads. Cindy Robertson also stated that the Conservation Commission has discussed being consistent across all properties. The first step is to establish rules, mark properties and post signs.
Comment #26: What is the next step?
Cindy Robertson reiterated that there needs to be rules and policies in place, signage installed, and boundaries marked. Then develop ideas and trails.
Swift Corwin recommended a trail survey with game cameras. That will provide a feel for how much of a problem there is out there. First thing is to post the property lines and with rules.

Comment #27: Is there an issue with liability if residents decide to go out and try to fix some issues on the trails?
Steve Couture stated yes and no. The terms of the Conservation Easement must be met. There are specific requirements. If not done in the right way, legally, the Town is liable to fix it. It would be great to have a formal trail group, which happens in other communities then there would be projects identified.
Cindy Robertson stated that everyone is volunteers and there are a lot of projects in town.

Public hearing ended at 7:00pm.

Minutes respectively submitted by

Leann Fuller
Administrative Assistant

Please see subsequent meeting minutes for any amendments to these minutes.