Cindy Robertson called the meeting to order at 4:30pm.

Present: Cindy Robertson-Chair, David Ross-Vice Chair, JoCarol Woodburn-Member, Phil Fitanides-Member, Deborah Miville-Member, Robert Better-Alternate, David Hess-Alternate (arrived at 4:36pm)

Not Present: John Pieroni-Alternate, William Herlicka- Alternate

Staff: Leann Fuller, Administrative Assistant

Pledge of Allegiance was recited by those present.

I. Consent Agenda
   i. Transfer from the People’s Conservation Account $187,720.40 to pay invoices approved between October and December 2019.
   ii. Conservation News
   iii. Bear-Paw Thank you Letter
   iv. Notice of Acceptance of Permit Application Laurel Rd/Spruce Ct Map 21, Lot 15
   v. Wetlands and Non-site Specific Permit 2019-01726

David Ross motioned to accept the Consent agenda as is, seconded by Phil Fitanides. Motion passed.

II. Meeting Minutes Approvals
   - December 9, 2019

Deborah Miville motioned to approve the meeting minutes from December 9, 2019, seconded by Avery Comai. Motion passed.

III. Appointments
   i. Jeff Littleton, Moosewood Ecological
      University Heights/Town Pond/School District Stewardship Plan progress

Swift Corwin joined Jeff Littleton to update the Conservation Commission. Jeff Littleton started the conversation with an update on the status of the Carriage Hill/University Heights/Town Pond and School District Stewardship plan. Jeff still has a couple more days remaining of ecological assessments. He has been out around Carriage Hill and University Heights noting potential vernal pools. He has seen a lot of deer tracks, which could prove difficult in terms of forestry. There is also porcupine, fisher cat, bobcat and fox tracks. The next areas to visit is where Swift Corwin has been which is the Town Pond and School district properties. Jeff’s goal is to review the existing information and go out a couple more times, finish assessing the area and prepare a draft plan.
Swift Corwin, Forester, went out to the land that forest management is allowed. He stated how the area is
dependable and a lot of people use it. The land is well drained and was logged about 30 years ago. There is not a
high density of timber but there is a lot of low bush blueberries to the point where it is sometimes hard to
keep feet on the ground. There are a lot of trails going through the area and that can be a major management
issue. With the new housing development around, there is more use of the area. There is no rush to do any
harvesting because it is more of a park.

Jeff Littleton stated that he received an e-mail from Steve Couture that clarified there is an additional partial
that needs to be reviewed. The map shows the Carriage Manor parcel but that is part of University Heights
and Carriage Manor is north of that. There is no forestry allowed on that property except for maintaining
roads. Swift has completed his field work.

David Ross asked Swift if he had noticed any signs of abuse on those well used areas. Swift replied that he did
not see any litter at all. There were also no invasive species that he saw. There are some places where 4
wheelers are running through the property along with several hunting blinds. David asked Swift to provide
notations regarding that information.

Jeff Littleton's goal is to have a plan for review and comment in front of the Conservation Commission in
March.

ii. **Chip Fredette, Merrimack Valley Trail Riders**

Cystic Fibrosis Charity Ride on Chester Turnpike

Chip Fredette read his letter into record. The dates for the charity ride are June 13th and June 14th. Sunday
would be the loop that would go over Chester Turnpike. Chip reviewed 4 points regarding this ride. The charity
ride is the Cystic Fibrosis' foundations oldest “grass roots” event, it was created 40 years ago by locals.
Dartmouth Hitchcock in West Lebanon and Hanover is home to the lead research doctor for Cystic Fibrosis,
which is supported by this ride. To date, this event has raised over $2,000,000. The foundation released a
statistic that the last 7 years of fundraising directly supported an increase of life expectancy of a Cystic Fibrosis
patient by 4 years.

Cindy Robertson clarified that the Town Council referred this back to the Conservation Commission for a
recommendation. David Ross stated that he was on the Town Council when the riding on Chester Turnpike
was originally brought up and the Town Council made an allowance for permitted uses as other Towns do.
David did not see a problem with this especially since they have all regulatory items in place. Cindy asked how
many riders participate in the ride. Chip stated that there are about 400 riders, however there would be 250-
300 passing down Chester Turnpike. It all depends on the weather and the day itself. Cindy asked how they
access Chester Turnpike and Chip stated they stop in Allenstown at the Irving gas station then proceed
through the northern gate in Allenstown to start on Chester Turnpike then go through the end gate in
Hooksett and head towards Candia on North Road. Chip clarified that there would be no parking in Hooksett,
they begin and end at the New Hampshire Motor Speedway. They have members from all over New England,
and across the country to California.

Cindy’s only concern is riders deciding to go back out after the event. Chip stated that they are made aware at
the beginning of the event that the areas that are ridden are only for one day use. Bear Brook requires a
special trail permit as well. It is commonplace with the club and community. That is not to say that others who
live nearby and see this happening that they may go out.
Robert Better asked if out of state riders must register in New Hampshire. Chip clarified that another permit they receive is through Fish and Game. The Rally Permit allows those not registered in New Hampshire to participate for the one weekend event. Those registered for the event are also required to go through a technical inspection which includes having a rider number, completing a sound test to make sure they are below 96 dB, have a working headlight, taillight and horn.

Phil Fitanides asked about how they may get information out if they were to cancel the event due to extreme weather. Chip stated that these are hardy people that ride. They raised money and come to ride. They have not cancelled a ride due to weather. Ultimately, it is up to the rider’s discretion. With regards to repair and clean up after the ride, through way of a grant by the Bureau of Trails, the club has a 6-wheeler and 4-wheeler with a York rake used to repair trails. When the ride is complete, there is an assessment of impact, usually the trails hold up well. When it comes to dry weather, all bikes must be equipped with a spark arrestor to prevent any sparks creating a fire. Phil also asked if they notify anyone in Town regarding the ride. Chip stated that for the last 39 years, they send letters to the Chief of Police of each municipality. Those letters go out by May 16.

David Ross made a motion that the Hooksett Conservation Commission express their support for the use of Chester Turnpike in the limited fashion of the Cystic Fibrosis ride, seconded by Phil Fitanides. Motion passed.

Chip finalized the discussion by stating that they typically place an A frame sign at the Irving station and he may be able to locate one to put at the end of Chester Turnpike to make people aware it is a charity ride and one day event.

iii. Steve Couture-Steward for Bear-Paw and Katrina Amaral, Executive Director for Bear-Paw

i. Merrimack County Conservation District regarding leasing fields

Steve Couture brought the Conservation Commission up to speed. The corn field is active mainly with one individual farmer. As part of the lease with that farm, there was supposed to be mowing of other fields completed. Steve and Cindy discussed exploring what else those fields could be used for to maximize its agricultural use. Steve had a conservation with the Merrimack County Conservation District (MCCD) who are agricultural experts. Due to the excellent negotiating skills, there is very clear easement language that agricultural use has no limitations if there is a management plan in place. Steve reached out to the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF), so they were kept in the loop. One recommendation that MCCD had was identifying what the Conservation Commission wants to achieve. Steve proceeded forward and had a conversation with the LaValley’s. They are very active in town with a farm stand and seemed interested. They would prefer a longer arrangement as it would take time to improve the soil health to grow other items for human consumption. 5-10 years is a timeframe they would be willing to look at. Steve mentioned that an annual fee may be reasonable.

David Hess stated that it may not necessarily have to be a fee but maybe some bartering. Steve Couture mentioned that it was done in the past, the farmer could use the land but needs to mow the other fields, which did not quite work. MCCD did recommend a soil test and LaValley’s mentioned that as well since biosolids were previously used. It is a very inexpensive test. David Hess also mentioned that the corn field was accessed from the north through private property. Steve stated that he discussed that with MCCD and whoever is allowing that to happen, they are hoping they will still be amendable to that. Cindy brought up that there is a lot of milkweed on other fields and it may be a good idea to investigate preserving some of that for the butterflies.
David Ross stated that there must be diligence done as to what the market value is for leasing the farmland.

Steve Couture is recommending building up the soil health and make it more of a sustainable practice to align with the rest of the Conservation Easement and build a sense of community. In talking with Mr. Pritchard in the past, to convert one field to hay, he wanted the Town to pay him $20,000. It takes time to convert the field. David Ross agreed with the idea of responsible agriculture. The field has been used historically under previous owners. David Ross stated he was in favor of continuing the discussion.

Avery Comai asked if there was a water source there. Steve Couture assumed he was referring to irrigation, which is not available. Steve discussed that with MCCD. Requiring a water source depends on the crop and location. That would come up when developing the plan. Cindy Robertson asked Steve if his sense was that they should have a management plan in place by April. Katrina Amaral recommended talking to SPNHF about that. Steve does believe it should be in place by April. David Ross asked if a management plan is something the lessee could provide. Steve stated that MCCD does have standard formats. However, to be fair, before asking an entity to develop a plan, which they may not be authorized to do, it may be better to work with the entity to develop the plan.

David Hess agreed to explore what could be done with the corn field and possible add a portion of the middle field that is north of where the current trail cuts across. David Hess did ask why the plan for the Merrimack Riverwalk trail loop comes out so far away from the wetland. Steve Couture is going to investigate that. Steve Couture requested that one or two members be integral to this discussion between meetings. David Ross recommended that Avery Comai do so has the Council representative. Cindy Robertson asked that David Hess be involved as well.

ii. Merrimack Riverwalk Trail Phase III Cost Estimate

Steve Couture reviewed the cost estimate for Phase III. There is a potential Eagle Scout project to complete a temporary bridge. Going north towards Allenstown only makes sense so when Allenstown and Pembroke are ready to connect to Concord, Hooksett has a trail there as well. Cindy would love to see the loop finished. However, it would be best to take the time and let people get out there and see Phase II as they would be more inclined to vote for a Warrant Article. Steve Couture mentioned there may be a window for a RTP trail grant which may help fund the bridge.

iii. Warrant article process

Leann Fuller stated that June or July is when the warrant article process begins. Leann brought up that in 2015, there was a $100,000 Warrant Article placed on the ballot for the Merrimack Riverfront Trail System. In the April 4, 2015 Deliberative Session minutes, Mr. Lizotte stated “This is a one-time investment for the town.”

At the January 21, 2015 Town Council meeting, Councilor Comai mentioned she did not see an end date or amount which was further discussed that there was a DOT grant pending to fund $600,000 of the project.

Lastly, the Budget Committee minutes of the March 5, 2015 meeting, David Hess stated that he was present to ask for the support of 1/10 of the cost to develop a trail system along the Merrimack. Leann brought this information forward as a heads up as she is aware this information may go in front of Town Council if a Warrant Article is presented next year.

iv. Bear-Paw Stewardship Contract for 2020

Conservation Commission Minutes January 13, 2020
Katrina Amaral stated that the new contract is nearly identical to the previous contract. The main differences are that she added in more specifics as to what they hope to accomplish in 2020. Bear-Paw overseeing any potential SCA projects would go under other activities as requested. Katrina will be reached out to SCA to see what their deadlines are for this year. David Hess asked Katrina if they have any other contracts like this in other Towns. Katrina stated no, only project by project basis. David Hess mentioned that the contract does not state there will be a description of services rendered to back up the cost. That will be added to the contract prior to signature.

JoCarol Woodburn asked Katrina what the status of the kiosk is. Katrina stated that she orders signs. Once those are received, she will then invoice the Conservation Commission.

IV. Other business: Projects, Invoices, Etc.
   i. Heads Pond Trail Signs

Leann Fuller added this to the agenda as Deb Miville brough this up at the last meeting. The last e-mail correspondence Leann had with the Kiwanis was that they were working with the Boy Scouts to complete some trail maintenance and signs in the Spring.

   ii. Brick Kiln Historic Loop grand opening event planning

Cindy Robertson stated that it looks like it will be in May and will coordinate with Kathie Northrup.

   iii. Entrance signs for Merrimack Riverwalk Trail

Cindy Robertson reviewed the signs that JoCarol created. Cindy would like to see “motorized wheelchairs welcome” removed as she sees it as other wheelchairs are not welcome. JoCarol will make a few adjustments.

The kiosk flyer was also reviewed and approved by the Conservation Commission.

   iv. Bear-Paw Stewardship Invoice for Steve Couture $275.00

   "Avery Comai made a motion to pay the Bear-Paw invoice for Steve Couture $275.00, seconded by David Ross. Motion passed."

   v. Stantec Invoice for $1,376.00

   "JoCarol Woodburn made a motion to pay the Stantec invoice for $1,376.00, seconded by Deb Miville. Motion passed."

   "Cindy Robertson motioned to adjourn, seconded by Avery Comai. Meeting adjourned at 6:22pm"

Minutes respectively submitted by

Leann Fuller
Administrative Assistant

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