

Conservation Commission

Wednesday, July 11, 2007
Corner Meeting House
Belmont, New Hampshire

Members Present: Chairman K. Knowlton, N. Wederski, S. Rolfe,
D. Naiva, J. Pike, G. Wells-Kay
Members Absent: W. Peterson(u)
Alternates Present: M. Lewandoski, M. McLetchie
Staff: R. Ball, D. Rollins

NATURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY:

John Severance and Elise Lawton of Watershed to Wildlife, Inc. were present to introduce the recently completed Natural Resource Inventory to the public. They are both certified wetland scientists and wildlife biologists. They have done NRIs throughout the state and started the one in Belmont just over a year ago. With a Power Point presentation they were able to show some of their findings to the members and to the approximately 20 people from the public who attended. They passed out copies of a summary of Belmont's NRI. They went on to explain how they did the inventory. They first compiled and integrated existing data. They came up with areas based on the data for fieldwork. They then presented these areas to the Conservation Commission who helped them decide which areas to do the fieldwork on. Their next step was GIS analysis and mapping of these areas. The results they put in their final NRI report. They offered a GIS training session for use of the town data. Finally they do a public presentation of their project. They used several tools to collect their data including aerial photography, topographic maps, a digital camera and a global positioning system GPS receiver (Garmin III Plus). They used standard Windows XP software and ArcView and AutoCAD Map 6.

Their presentation consisted of the many pictures they took while doing their fieldwork. They had pictures of the different bodies of water in Belmont including Lake Winnisquam and the Tioga River. Some of the pictures included the wildlife such as an osprey nest on a power line pole, bear and mink tracks. They said they saw a lot of beaver activity scattered throughout Belmont. They also had pictures of the different type of properties such as gravel pits, fields and farms. They did look at some of the plants in the areas. The different type of plants can indicate what kind of soil there is.

In the NRI summary that was passed out they noted that the Wetland Complexes from the National Wetland Inventory data are generally under represented at 6.9 per cent and the Hydric Soils from the Natural Resource Conservation Service data are generally over represented at 18.1per cent.

They said they did not see as many wetlands as they have seen in other towns. They did see a lot of good farm land with 4.5 per cent designated as prime farmland which is the best soil classified on a federal scale. They found 5.3 per cent designated as farm land of statewide importance and 48.3 per cent designated as farm land of local importance. They explained that the 3 categories of farmland are classified by looking at the the quality of the soil.

They listed the uses of the project results. The results can be reviewed and retrieved for multi level data and they give a town wide and regional view of existing conditions. They can be used as a planning tool for what if scenarios. The results have identified unique areas such as wildlife corridors, riparian habitat, wetlands, gravel deposits and potential deer yards. They can be used as an education tool for town officials and residents. Standard maps of areas of interest can be printed. At any time new data and layers can be added for updating and growing the database. Future studies and events can be integrated to build upon this database indefinitely. The results can be included in the Master Plan updates. They anticipate that their efforts from this project will help in future work and inventories, as well as provide data to guide future development throughout Belmont.

They listed future steps for GIS enhancement one of which is the integration of regional data from other neighboring projects. Also there could be a work station for public access at a town facility such as the town hall or library. There could be an annual updating of the database. There also could be a town ordinance that all future developments and surveys of projects be delivered in AutoCad compatible digital format.

In the summary there were some areas identified for additional work. They stressed the importance of conserving the wetlands complexes adjacent to brooks and their tributaries. They suggested that an in-depth inventory of vernal pools be done. It is important that steps be taken to protect the groundwater, brooks, and aquifers in Belmont. Since there is a relatively small amount of dense softwood stands compared to the overall amount of forested land in Belmont the existing stands should be maintained for the benefit of the deer, moose and other wildlife populations. Continuing to explore for lands to potentially add to conservation lands will further benefit the town's natural resources. Encourage developers to retain as much of the natural setting as possible, perhaps incorporating buffers between lots. Increase riparian buffers whenever possible. Lastly they suggested that Belmont continue to work with other organizations and agencies throughout the region to share future data as it becomes available.

There was a question and answer session from the audience after their presentation.

The Conservation Commission members and the Planning Board members have received copies of the Natural Resource Inventory and it is on the Town of Belmont website.

A 5 minute recess was called by the Chairman.

J. Pike left (7:30 p.m.)

The Chairman reopened the meeting at 7:50 p.m. He appointed M. McLetchie as a voting member for tonight's meeting.

BOARD'S ACTION-MINUTES:

MOTION: On a motion by N. Wederski, seconded by D. Naiva, it was voted to approve the minutes of the June 6, 2007 meeting as written. (6-0)

EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT UPDATE:

Kurtis Bartlett was present to ask the members about his proposal to build an information kiosk in the town forest for his Eagle Scout project. It will be placed at the trailhead on Wildlife Boulevard and will be offset off the pavement. The structure will be made out of 4 x 4 timbers and will have an overhanging roof. There will be a plexiglass cover for protection. After much discussion the members decided to have him build it single sided with one half covered by plexiglass where they can put the trail map and rules and regulations. The other half will have the name of the town forest. He will use pressure treated wood for the posts and will stain it. It will have concrete anchors. The members decided on the size to be 3' x 6'. He said he will give the members a copy of his final proposal after it is approved by his troop leaders. He agreed to meet with K. Knowlton at the site before he begins the project. He told the members that he has to have 3 project proposals and asked them if he could make a proposal to put up trailmarkers and clear the trails in the town forest. The members agreed. He said his first choice is to build the kiosk.

STAFF REPORT:

CONSERVATION COMMISSION BUDGET:

R. Ball told the members that in June \$525 was spent out of the projects fund for the Judy Hartke print for Jeff Marden. From the professional services fund they spent \$1,700 for an environmental site assessment on the Bean Dam property and \$500 for an application to the surplus lands program at NH DOT. He said he has made an application to look at the Clairmont pit on Brown Hill Road.

WETLANDS APPLICATION:

R. Ball told the members that he has received only one wetlands application. Mr. James Locke has applied to breach the Bean Dam. He plans to bring it down to the level of the pond. D. Naiva said some of the members walked the property on June 10 and they have concerns about bringing it all the way down. K. Knowlton said it will be up to DES.

WHIP APPLICATION:

R. Ball said that they did not get approved for the WHIP application. There were other applications that had more environmental benefits.

OTHER BUSINESS:

STONINGTON OPEN SPACE:

K. Knowlton questioned whether Mark Mooney's open space property is owned by the town yet. R. Ball will check into it.

OPEN SPACE/CONSERVATION LAND:

K. Knowlton would like to see a map showing what land the Conservation Commission has and what land is pending. The members agreed that would be helpful.

CONSERVATION COMMISSION NEWSLETTER:

G. Wells-Kay updated the members that the newsletter will be printed this week.

TIOGA ESTATES:

D. Naiva gave R. Ball a copy of the e-mail she received from Henry Schoenberger, the Manager of the Tioga View Condominium Association. She had followed up on the letter that was sent to him last August about using a small portion of the public trail within the Town Forest that crosses over onto the Association's property. He said that the Association has agreed to grant public access but want some boulders set and a sign declaring that they are on private property which means no trespassing off the trail. He does want to be consulted about the location of the boulders and the wording/placement of the signage.

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: On a motion by N. Wederski, seconded by G. Wells-Kay, it was voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:10 p.m. (6-0)

Respectfully submitted,

Denise Rollins

