

Conservation Commission

Wednesday, December 14, 2005
Corner Meeting House
Belmont, New Hampshire

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

The chairman opened the meeting at 7:04 p.m. He appointed G. Wells-Kay as a voting member for tonight's meeting.

MEMBER CHANGE:

Chairman Knowlton said that he has tried to contact J. Peverly about his continued absences and he has not responded. Therefore he would like to contact the Board of Selectmen and ask them to dismiss him from the Conservation Commission and make G. Wells-Kay a full member. It states in the Conservation Commission Rules of Procedure "If a member misses five (5) consecutive meetings with no contact, this shall be evidence for non-interest. The Commission shall then vote to recommend to the Board of Selectmen that the member be removed from the Commission."

MOTION: On a motion by N. Wederski, seconded by D. Naiva, the members voted to request the Board of Selectmen dismiss J. Peverly from his position as a member of the Belmont Conservation Commission and to move G. Wells-Kay from an alternate member to a full member. (6-0)

CONSERVATION LAND ACQUISITION POLICY:

D. Naiva gave the members draft copies of a land acquisition plan that she wrote. She said she used Milford's Land Acquisition & Management plan as an example to go by and went through past minutes, the masterplan and notes she has taken. She included a quote from the 2002 Belmont Master Plan which states that "Natural resources largely define Belmont's rural character. Rural character is a quality of life and place... characterized by open space, historic places, forests and farmlands." The topics covered are Acquisition Criteria, Sources of Prospective Parcels, Prioritization, and Sources of Money. D. Naiva asked

for assistance from the members to help write the Land Acquisition Process portion of the plan. Chairman Knowlton thought they should have some sort of grading system that would explain why a piece of property should be acquired. It would explain what is attractive to a particular piece. The voters may want to know how the members decided on it. There could be some method to evaluate and prioritize properties. S. Rolfe suggested using the term land protection rather than land acquisition. They may get a conservation easement in which case the land is not acquired. The members agreed that it could be changed to the Belmont Open Space Protection Plan.

K. Knowlton suggested adding a legal expense line in their budget since there will be legal expenses when they do decide to buy property. Another suggestion was to add a land acquisition line which would be used for surveying, appraisals or legal expenses. B. Watterson said that the issue may be that they should be spending their conservation fund instead. C. Daigle suggested that the members approach the Board of Selectmen asking them to maintain the conservation fund for big ticket items only. That way they won't deplete the current use money. They could request \$8,000 to be added to their budget for land acquisition expenses.

MOTION: On a motion by N. Wederski, seconded by M. Lewandoski, the members voted to submit an additional budget request of \$8,000 to be used for land acquisition expenses. (6-0)

CONSERVATION LAND ACQUISITION:

The members have discussed in previous meetings in non-public sessions the possibility of purchasing the Chertok property on Tax Lot 124-022. R. Ball has received an e-mail from them in response to a letter he sent them outlining the goals of the Conservation Commission to purchase their property for \$1.5 million. They requested \$15,000 as a deposit to hold the land until the March 2006 Town Meeting. They also agreed to an extension until March 2007 for an additional \$25,000. R. Ball showed the members the 11 acres that they want to retain which includes the entire frontage on Shaker Road and 945 feet along Pout Pond. They are willing to grant to the town a right of way of 33 feet for access to the property. M. Lewandoski was concerned that most of the access to the pond is on the land they want to control. He said that they will need to be able to present to the public that there will be a public access to the pond. The people will want to know the accessibility. R. Ball said a survey of the property should be done to make sure the title lines are clear which could cost \$20-25,000. He said the question will come up as to exactly how much land it is. K. Knowlton said that there doesn't seem to be enough time to get things ready before March town meeting. He asked the members if they should pursue it for the next meeting in 2007. He said he could have someone from the Trust for Public Lands come in to advise them. They could look for funds and they could look at the property for a source of revenue. He said all the members need to be willing to spend the time. M. Lewandoski asked if there were other properties that may be coming up for sale that may be of equal value. The members discussed other land that they may be able to obtain for less money that would also be valuable for the town to own. D. Naiva told the members if they vote not to secure the property they should consider it gone and if they vote to secure it then they will all have to be willing to go out and talk to the public. M. Lewandoski said that the voters will be looking at them for what they think. He said since they want to get land in which they can maintain wildlife corridors then they should go for property that is more affordable. K. Knowlton said he needed a unanimous board who were all for it.

MOTION: A motion was made by N. Wederski to offer the \$15,000 to the Chertoks for a downpayment on their property. It was seconded by M. Lewandoski. After further discussion the members voted unanimously against purchasing it. (0-6)

D. Naiva thanked R. Ball for all the work he has done for the Commission in this matter.

SUBCOMMITTEES:

G. Wells-Kay has proposed 3 subcommittees. The Education Committee would involve publicity, community education, new member training and school system liaison. The Field Committee would involve the Town Forest, violations investigations and NRI fieldwork. The Conservation Land Acquisition & Stewardship Committee would pertain to land acquisitions and land stewardship. The committees would meet once a month and report to the full Commission each month.

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: On a motion by N. Wederski, seconded by M. Lewandoski, it was voted unanimously to adjourn at 10:00 p.m. (6-0)

Respectfully submitted,

Denise Rollins

