

Conservation Commission minutes for September 7, 2017 meeting

Litchfield Conservation Commission
September 7, 2017
7:00 p.m. Town Hall
2 Liberty Way

Minutes approved 10/12/2017

Members Present: Tom Levesque – Chairman
Joan McKibben – Vice Chairman
Roger St. Laurent
Richard Husband
Michael Croteau (came in late)
Matt Lepore
Jack Curtin

Selectmen’s Rep: Kevin Bourque

Absent: Marion Godzik
Sharon Jones
Harry Menzigian (Alternate)

Called to order 7:02 PM by Tom Levesque

Public in attendance : River Access Sub-Committee members (not identified, but including Rich Lascelles); Eagle Scout William Parker and his mother, of Litchfield; Raymond Peeples of Litchfield.

Public Input: None.

I. New Business:

- **Fishing Derby** – Joan McKibben suggested that the Conservation Commission may want to take a year off if no one else will run it due to issues this year involving a demonstrated lack of respect for Conservation Commission members running it, and noted that Harry Menzigian contacted the individual who had expressed interest in running it, but did not receive a reply. Joan McKibben indicated that we should decide whether we are running it next year for budgeting purposes, but it was decided that we could leave it in the budget for now, pending a final decision whether we will run it, to be voted on after Joan McKibben contacts the Recreation Commission to see if they will agree to take it over.
- **2018 Budget** – Fishing derby kept in the budget for now (see above). Budget is about the same as last year: \$2,860 including fishing derby.
- **Volunteer needed for Planning Board Community Design Subcommittee** – Joan McKibben references August 11, 2017 letter from Planning Board inviting Conservation Commission member to serve as a designee on the newly formed Planning Board Community Design Subcommittee to

develop a new Community Design chapter of the Master Plan. Joan McKibben agreed to handle the role for now.

II. Old Business:

- **Jack Curtin application and Selectmen interview** – Jack Curtin completed the application and interview process with the Selectmen and has been appointed an alternate Conservation Commission member.
- **Appraisal amounts** – Joan McKibben sent out six requests for proposals for appraisals and has received four back. To be discussed non-public.
- **Clean-Up Route 3A** – Tom Levesque stated that he does not believe Conservation Commission members should clean the highway until the state cuts back the brush. Joan McKibben suggested that we see how the brush is in October and revisit it then: Tom Levesque agreed, there was no opposition, and the matter was carried over until October.
- **The River Access Sub-Committee** – The River Access Sub-Committee presented its final report and final recommendation based on work sub-committee has completed. Recapped efforts to date: started with seven sites and, after site-walks at several, narrowed it down to 296 Charles Bancroft Highway, land purchased by the Conservation Commission. At least Conservation Commission meeting, they presented three access options at 296 Charles Bancroft Highway:
(1) run a road down the middle of the field to the river; (2) run a road down to within about 250 feet of the river with a footpath from there to the river; (3) run a road all of the way down the side of the field to the river. At the last sub-committee meeting, on August 17, 2017, Option 2 (road to within 250 feet of river, footpath from there) was chosen as the option to pursue on a 10-1 vote. Sub-committee then focused on a conceptual plan that would be low impact and result in minimal disturbance. Highlights of plan: (1) Lockable gate at entranceway (to close at night); (2) signs at entrance (name of park) and at river (park rules); (3) possible white vinyl or similar fence from 3A down 100-200 feet of a roughly 20-foot wide, approximately 500-foot long gravel driveway; (4) and (5) gravel driveway would be lined with trees and boulders for aesthetics and blocking access to abutting farmer's field and neighbor's property; (6) possible gates part-way down the gravel driveway for the farmer; (7) 50 X 75 or 50 X 100 feet wide parking area at end of gravel driveway for 8-10 cars; and (8) small pathway to the river from end of gravel driveway. Part of parking area as now designed would likely be within 250 feet of shoreline, requiring permitting, but parking area might be moved to avoid that. Security cameras were priced as an option. Roughly 30 feet of the approximately 1200 feet of road frontage of property would be used (approximately 2.5% of total) and roughly 1 – 1.5 acres of the total 13.6 acre parcel, or approximately 11%. No trees would be cut. Other considerations: (1) Fire Department consulted and approved (noted they do not have year-round public access to the river for rescues and it would be good access); (2) Rich and Chris looked into ADA compliance and should not be an issue (requirements easily met); (3) State was consulted on shoreline permitting and DOT permitting (DOT did not see problem with 3A access); (4) did deed research at registry (no concerns); and (5) checked construction options. Two construction options: (1) have U.S. Army handle construction as pilot program—roughly \$7,600 - \$10,000 (government “delighted” at idea; application needs to be submitted; price would cover everything but fuel); (2) have a contractor do it for roughly \$28,600 (fencing and security cameras are not included in the pricing for either option). The Recreation Commission is considering the numbers for its budgeting.

Gate would be 10 feet or so in from 3A for plowing; access area would be closed in winter time with little to no maintenance required.

Comments

Roger St. Laurent: Inquired as to whether decision to use security cameras could not be taken up later, after access had been used, as cameras have not been necessary for Darrah Pond or other town-managed sites. Rich Lascelles essentially agreed, noting that nothing has been cast in stone about cameras. Sub

Joan McKibben: She spoke with Police Chief and he confirmed that police would patrol if accessible.

Michael Croteau: Inquired as to position of abutters (Bergs) on matter and was advised by sub-committee that Mrs. Berg was on the sub-committee and was the one dissenting vote.

Public comments:

Ray Peeples: Expressed opinion that he is not opposed to river access but does oppose the site chosen by the sub-committee and that he believes the sub-committee has not researched possible access sites enough and is taking the easy way out—should have pressured state more to provide access as state has long promised to provide access. Sub-committee responded that promised state site had been investigated but state would not permit because slope is too steep. Also thought that letter from Rich Lascelles to the McQuestens was threatening.

Richard Husband: Responded that he thought it unfair that Mr. Peeples would question effort of sub-committee when he had not attended meetings, had no idea what effort they had put into it, and they had, in fact, put a lot of effort into it the matter. Also questioned how state could be made to fund and provide site when they it was not willing to do so, and how the letter to the McQuestens was threatening.

Tom Levesque: Stated that he thought the Lascelles' letter was threatening, and bullying, and land was purchased for conservation, not recreation, to preserve as farmland in perpetuity—river access site would change the character of the land. He also thought the proposed site would be ugly, a blight on the town, and, while he is all for river access, the proposed site is not the right one, in his opinion. He denied that he opposes the project because he is Charlie McQuesten's brother-in-law—he wants the property preserved as farmland, not a boat launch, period. He said that the Building Inspector, Kevin Lynch, has a couple of other spots in mind.

General discussion among several people as to whether there are other possible sites ...

Rich Lascelles: Responded that his letter was not meant to be threatening, was intended only to convince people that this is a good thing to do—did not go behind anyone's back but copied everyone.

Tom Levesque: Thanked sub-committee and stated that Commission would reconvene on the matter the following month.

III. Other Business:

- Having reviewed the site, **Arbor Circle tree-cutting** request seems reasonable to Joan McKibben and Commission agreed to accept her recommendation (no formal vote).
- State's annual report informed of t.v. and microwave at **Moore's Falls**, which Joan McKibben had removed. Roger St. Laurent to try and cut grass before September 30, 2017 library walk at Moore's Falls.
- Conservation Commission annual meeting is November 4, 2017 and Joan McKibben urged members to attend, especially new members.
- Rain fall report - Roger St. Laurent – June: 8.2" of rain. July: 6.9" of rain. August: 9.2" of rain. We had a wet summer.
- Eagle Scout William Parker informed the Commission that his **project at Moore's Falls** is going well, that sign posts will be placed next.

IV. Approval of Minutes:

No minutes to approve.

- V. Non-Public pursuant to RSA 91A:3d:** Commission went into non-public session for remainder of meeting.

Recess until October 5, 2017 meeting

Respectfully Submitted by: Richard M. Husband, Conservation Commission Member