

Atkinson Conservation Commission Minutes
Wednesday, April 27, 2022, 7:00 PM
Atkinson Town Hall

Approved May 25, 2022

Members Present:

Paul Wainwright, Chair
Bill Steele, Vice Chair
John Fournier, Secretary
Scott Kukshtel
Jeff Nenart
Monique Chrétien, Alternate (voting)

Others Present:

Selectman Liaison, Bob Worden
Planning Board Alternate, Karen McFadden
Planning Board Member, Paul DiMaggio
Julie LaBranche

1. Call to Order, and Attendance:

Chair Paul Wainwright called the meeting to order in person at Atkinson Town Hall at 7:11PM on Wednesday, April 27th, 2022. Chair Wainwright took attendance and all members are present with the exception of Members Newman & McVay. Chair Wainwright stated that Alternate Chrétien will be voting.

2. Election of Officers

Chair Wainwright stated that it is time again to elect the officers of the Commission. Chair Wainwright continued that he is happy to run again for Chair and Member Steele has agreed to run for Vice Chair. Chair Wainwright stated that Member Fournier has agreed to run for Secretary.

Member Nenart made a motion to elect Paul Wainwright as Chair, Bill Steele as Vice Chair, and John Fournier as Secretary of the Atkinson Conservation Commission. Alternate Chrétien seconded the motion. Vote: 6/0/0, the motion carried.

3. Review and approval of minutes:

a. March 23, 2022 Public

Chair Wainwright presented the minutes of the March 23, 2022 public meeting and asked for comments or corrections. John noted one correction on page five

to clarify that it was the Sawyer Homestead well that was being referred to during the discussion; John noted one typographical error also on page five.

Vice Chair Steele made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of the March 23, 2022 public session of the Atkinson Conservation Commission, as amended above. Secretary Fournier seconded the motion. Members Kukshtel & Chrétien abstained from the motion because they were not in attendance. Vote: 4/0/2, the motion carried.

b. April 4, 2022 Non-public

Chair Wainwright presented the minutes of the April 4, 2022 Non-public meeting and asked for comments or corrections, there were none.

Member Nenart made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of the April 4, 2022 Non-public session of the Atkinson Conservation Commission, as written. Secretary Fournier seconded the motion. Members Kukshtel & Chrétien abstained from the motion because they were not in attendance. Vote: 4/0/2, the motion carried.

c. April 11, 2022 Non-public

Chair Wainwright presented the minutes of the April 11, 2022 Non-public meeting and asked for comments or corrections, there were none.

Member Nenart made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of the April 11, 2022 non-public session of the Atkinson Conservation Commission, as written. Vice Chair Steele seconded the motion. Members Kukshtel & Chrétien abstained from the motion because they were not in attendance. Vote: 4/0/2, the motion carried.

d. April 16, 2022

Chair Wainwright presented the minutes of the April 16, 2022 meeting and asked for comments or corrections, there were none.

Member Nenart made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of the April 16, 2022 meeting of the Atkinson Conservation Commission, as written. Vice Chair Steele seconded the motion. Members Kukshtel & Chrétien abstained from the motion. Vote: 4/0/2, the motion carried.

4. **Septic System on Conservation Land at Collins Park**

Chair Wainwright stated that the Collins Park land was purchased with Conservation Fund money. Chair Wainwright continued that in the deed to the land stated that it was purchased under the authority of NH RSA 36-A and it is under the administration and control of the Conservation Commission. Chair Wainwright stated that about a year after its purchase, Town Meeting voted to place a conservation easement on a large portion of the Sawyer Town Forest in exchange for allowing playing fields on the Collins Park Land. Chair Wainwright continued that the deed allows for a few items aside from the playing fields which include, in part, bathroom facilities, but there is no language in the deed to allow or deny septic systems.

Chair Wainwright stated that he has been approached by the Recreation Commission about putting in a septic system in at Collins Park to enable the construction of bathrooms. Chair Wainwright continued that he doesn't have any reservations about the addition of a septic system, but asked the Commission for comments. Member Nenart stated that he doesn't have any issue with adding a septic system as long as they don't have to do any additional clearing of trees, which means the system would need to be under the parking lot or under the fields. Mr. Worden stated that the Recreation Commission approached him about adding the septic system, and when they researched the matter, they found out that it was possible provided that the system remains 75 feet from the well and the leach field could reach out into the parking area or behind the barn. Mr. Worden continued that the addition of this system wouldn't require removing any trees, and it wouldn't be near the conservation trails.

Chair Wainwright stated that he would be in favor of conditionally approving this project provided the Commission can review and approve the final septic design prior to breaking ground.

Member Nenart made a motion to conditionally approve the installation of a septic system on the Collins Park Conservation Land to enable the construction of restrooms as permitted by the deed restriction from the Conservation Commission to the Recreation Commission filed at the Rockingham County Registry of Deeds book 4882 page 0099, conditioned on review and approval by the Conservation Commission of the final State approved septic design. Vice Chair Steele seconded the motion. Vote: 6/0/0, the motion carried.

5. Land Conservation Plan Facilitated Discussion – Julie LaBranche

a. Conservation goals for the Town of Atkinson

Chair Wainwright stated that the Land Conservation Plan is finally coming to closure. However, there is some input required from the Commission which is why he invited Julie LaBranche to discuss these items. Ms. LaBranche stated

that one item that needs some work is the open space plan which requires the Commission to express what their goals are for conservation land in Town. Ms. LaBranche produced copies of the draft goals she helped write with the assistance of Chair Wainwright, Vice Chair Steele, and Member Kukshtel. Chair Wainwright stated that the Commission has had goals all along, and the purpose of this discussion is just to put those goals onto paper.

Ms. LaBranche began writing down the Commission's goals on the flip chart so Members may affirm or clarify each goal, and so Members may begin to come up with measurable objectives necessary in order to achieve those goals. Ms. LaBranche read the Commission's draft goals as follows:

1. Preserving Atkinson's rural character by conserving forests, natural areas, and scenic vistas.
2. Protect ecologically significant resources such as wildlife habitats, riparian corridors, and wetlands.
3. Protect the quality and quantity of water resources including drinking water resources, groundwater resources, and surface waters.
4. Conserve ecologically important lands that would otherwise be developed to ensure their continued ecological functions and benefits for the community.
5. Make open space and natural areas accessible to current and future generations of Atkinson residents and visitors.
6. Gather data and prepare mapping for planning and decision-making in support of these goals.
7. Conduct public engagement and outreach about land conservation options and opportunities.
8. Coordinate with other Town functions, such as EPA MS-4 Permit Compliance, to protect water quality.

Member Nenart made a comment about goal #5 regarding the fact that preserving the conservation lands for wildlife habitat and watershed protection is the Commission's main priority, whereas making the lands accessible to residents and visitors would be a secondary priority. The Commission agreed. Chair Wainwright stated that this list is not in any particular order and at different times, each one of the goals may be the main priority. Ms. LaBranche stated that when considering a specific conservation opportunity, the goals will essentially be prioritized by site specific needs and resource values for that specific opportunity. Ms. LaBranche continued that she understands and agrees with Member Nenart's point, and some notes or caveats may need to be written into this goal in order to clarify the Commission's intent.

Chair Wainwright asked the Commission if anyone else thought goal #8 felt incongruous with the rest of the goals. Ms. LaBranche gave a brief description of the MS-4 (Municipal Separate Stormwater Sewer System) permit compliance program which is intended to preserve water quality under the Federal Clean Water Act. Ms. LaBranche continued that this nation-wide permit ensures that communities are not polluting their surface waters, and that communities are

managing the various discharges to those surface waters to preserve water quality. Chair Wainwright stated that he believes this goal may be satisfied by achieving the previous goals, and that this may be better suited as an objective of another goal. Ms. LaBranche stated that one of the things that benefits this goal is the adoption of small easements around surface waters and jurisdictional outfalls; the more the land is protected around these outfalls the easier it is for the Town to achieve permit compliance.

Ms. LaBranche stated that Atkinson has a good water resource profile because it doesn't have many surface waters aside from a few small streams and Island Pond, and the water quality of those resources are very good right now. Ms. LaBranche continued that it is important to include the permit compliance with MS-4 because it's much easier to preserve good quality resources rather than try to remediate polluted resources. Member Kukshtel reiterated that compliance with the MS-4 permit may be better as an objective of goal #3 rather than its own separate goal. Ms. LaBranche agreed and listed MS4 compliance as an objective under goal #3.

Ms. LaBranche stated that these goals were drafted for the purpose of creating content for the open space plan since the plan was lacking in Atkinson-specific goals and objectives. Ms. LaBranche continued that the Commission should go through the goal list and determine what the objectives should be for each goal. The Commission agreed.

Ms. LaBranche read goal #1 and asked the Commission what the objectives should be. Vice Chair Steele stated that one objective should be using maps & statistics to determine a baseline of the current state of the lands to be able to understand whether or not the Commission is acting effectively over the years. Member Nenart asked if "farm lands" counted as natural areas, and the Commission decided to add it to the goal. Ms. LaBranche stated that it will be important to define what the Commission means by natural areas and scenic vistas. Ms. LaBranche continued that since scenic vistas tend to be somewhat fluid over the years, an objective to monitor the vistas may be a good objective. Chair Wainwright suggested documenting the scenic vistas over time with photographs which will provide concrete documentation that they've been monitored. The Commission had a brief discussion about the definition of scenic vistas and which locations in Town would be considered vistas. The Commission decided to add "pronounced landscapes" to the goal which includes historical sites, stone walls, etc. Chair Wainwright suggested adding an objective around reporting the preservation successes of the Commission in the annual Town Report.

Ms. LaBranche read goal #2 and asked the Commission what the objectives should be. Member Nenart stated that one objective to achieve this goal is to acquire such sites or to establish easements on them. Chair Wainwright suggested an outreach objective to educate residents who own such lands but do not want to sell them or establish easements. Member Chrétien suggested an objective around signage along roadways adjacent to conservation lands to

encourage motorists to slow down while driving through wildlife habitats. Member Kukshtel suggested an objective around sending targeted advertising to residents who may have wildlife corridors in their backyards and not even be aware of them. The Commission discussed running a signage campaign to mark the wildlife corridors in Town.

Ms. LaBranche read goal #3 and asked the Commission what the objectives should be. J. LaBranche added the first objective as coordinating with the MS-4 program to achieve permit compliance. Chair Wainwright stated that water from private wells makes up about 60% of the Town's drinking water. The Commission had a brief discussion around the fact that they have limited capability to influence the regulated utility (Hampstead Area Water Company) that provides the other 40% of the Town's drinking water. The Commission discussed three separate incidents in which the groundwater was contaminated. Chair Wainwright stated that incidents such as these are frustrating to the Commission because, aside from outreach & education, there is not much we can do about it. The Commission agreed that a good objective would be to act as a voice to educate residents about groundwater contamination hazards such as pesticide & insecticide use. Ms. LaBranche suggested adding an objective to educate the public about water quality protection. Chair Wainwright suggested an objective to have a member of the Conservation Commission be a member of the Planning Board to be a voice for the environment. The Commission had a brief discussion around the level of authority that the Commission holds in such matters. Ms. LaBranche suggested an objective around looking at maps & data to see where incidents have happened and looking at groundwater recharge areas & well fields.

Ms. LaBranche read goal #4 and asked the Commission what the objectives should be. Secretary Fournier suggested changing the wording of this goal from "Conserving land that would otherwise be developed" to "Conserving land that *may* otherwise be developed". Member Fournier also suggested an objective of establishing easements on farm lands.

Because of time constraints, Chair Wainwright suggested that Ms. LaBranche move on to the next discussion topic.

- b. What are the issues and trends we deal with as a commission, both positive and negative?

Ms. LaBranche stated that the Commission has been in place for many years and asked what trends they've seen over the years; positive or negative. Member Nenart stated that there has been more use of the public lands over the past few years due to the pandemic, but also due to the kiosks that indicate the existence of trails and the trail maps which advertise the abundance of trails in Town. Member Kukshtel stated that the price of land and housing has increased dramatically, which makes land that much more coveted. Member Kukshtel continued that the goals do not address the priority of different properties that would be ideal for conservation lands or easements. Chair Wainwright stated

that one trend that effects the entire globe, rather than just in Town, is climate change. Chair Wainwright continued that there are initiatives and efforts the Town can put forth to assist in combating this issue, and mitigating the impact on our community.

Alternate Chrétien stated that she has made some efforts to encourage residents of the cluster developments in Town to plant wildflower gardens, since this would be more cost-effective than maintaining lush green lawns, and because it would help the ecosystem in many ways. Ms. LaBranche stated that there has been a steady flow of land development in Town over the years. The Commission had a brief discussion about the current state of land development in Town.

Ms. LaBranche suggested ending the discussion here and for the Members to submit other ideas and suggestions via email in the next two weeks so she and Chair Wainwright may compile them and send out the next draft of the plan.

6. **Next Regular Meetings: May 25 and June 22, 2022, at 7:00PM**
7. **Hold the Date: NH ACC Annual Conference will be Saturday, November 5, 2022**
8. **Non-Public session under NH RSA 91-A:3, II (d), for consideration of the acquisition of land**

Vice Chair Steele made a motion to go into a non-public session under NH RSA 91-A:3, II (d) for the consideration of the acquisition of land. Member Nenart seconded the motion. Vote: 6/0/0, the motion carried.

The meeting continued in non-public session, and those minutes are contained in a separate document.

Vice Chair Steele made a motion to exit non-public session. Secretary Fournier seconded the motion. Vote: 6/0/0, the motion carried.

Member Nenart made a motion to seal the minutes of the non-public meeting that has just concluded. Vice Chair Steele seconded. Vote: 6/0/0, the motion carried.

9. Adjournment

Member Kukshtel made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Vice Chair Steele seconded the motion. Vote: 6/0/0, the motion carried.

The meeting adjourned around 9:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Zachary Gilberti, Recording Clerk

Attachments:

- Pollinator Event summary report from Suzie Newman
- Handout from Julie LaBranche listing proposed goals

Pollinator Event update:

Another successful pollinator seed event (even with the rain and lightning). We passed out 150 packets of milkweed and native plant seeds. We had individuals from Atkinson and lots of other neighboring towns that saw the event information on Facebook, Carriage Town News and the Freshwater Farms display.

We are already a go with Freshwater Farms for 2023!

Huge thank you goes out to:

- Pollinator pathways for attending, educating and inspiring us to have this event.
- Monique and Jeff for helping with the event.
- John and Hannah for putting the conservation table together (we can use for next year as well)
- Pete for donating to our raffle and spending time at the event.
- Boy Scout Troop 9 for packaging seeds
- Girl Scout Troop 12573 for their AMAZING pollinator interactive station.
- Bill and Karen Steele for the Bee display
- Paul for letting us run with it.
- The Butterfly Place for donating a gift certificate
- Stateline Pet Supply for donating the bat house
- American Native Beauties for joining our event
- And lastly to Freshwater Farms and Rhonda Locke for being our host and donating seeds and raffle items!!!!

ATKINSON CONSERVATION COMMISSION – DRAFT GOALS + Objectives

Preserve Atkinson's rural character by conserving forests, natural areas and scenic vistas *Farm lands*

Protect ecologically significant resources such as wildlife habitats, riparian corridors and wetlands

Protect the quality and quantity of water resources including drinking water sources, groundwater resources and surface waters

→ *an objective*

Conserve lands that would otherwise be developed to ensure their continued ecological functions and benefits for the community

Make open space and natural areas accessible to current and future generations of Atkinson residents and visitors

Gather data and prepare mapping for planning and decision making in support of these goals

Conduct public engagement and outreach about land conservation options and opportunities

Coordinate with other town functions such as EPA MS4 Permit compliance to protect water quality