

Atkinson Conservation Commission Minutes
Wednesday, February 28, 2024, 7:00 PM
Atkinson Town Hall

Approved March 27, 2024

<p>Members Present</p> <p>Paul Wainwright, Chair Bill Steele, Vice Chair John Fournier, Secretary Monique Chrétien Jeff Nenart Sandy Cannon, Alternate Charlie Pitts, Alternate</p> <p>Members Absent:</p> <p>Suzie Newman Scott Kukshtel Chris Walker, Alternate</p>	<p>Others Present</p> <p>Selectman Ex-Officio Worden</p>
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1. Call to Order and Attendance

Chair Wainwright called the Wednesday, February 28, 2024 meeting of the Atkinson Conservation Commission to order at 7:02 PM.

Chair Wainwright informed the Commission members that the vendor working on the master plan will not have the latest updates ready for the meeting tonight. Ms. McFadden, Master Plan Committee Co-Chair, has requested to give her presentation when she has the latest updates, hopefully at our March meeting. Chair Wainwright agreed.

2. Review and Approval of Minutes (previously distributed)

January 31, 2024

Chair Wainwright made the following changes:

Page 5: Monique Chrétien stated that this could go with the rodenticide food web handout she will be having at the wildlife rehabilitator presentation.

Page 10: delete the sentence – “Member Chrétien has not received a response from the DPW director.” Last sentence, Member Newman should be Member Chrétien.

Chair Wainwright asked if there were more updates. There were none.

Member Nenart made a motion to approve the January 31, 2024 minutes of the Atkinson Conservation Commission as amended. Vice Chair Steele seconded the motion. All present voted in favor. Vote: 7/0/0. Unanimous.

Chair Wainwright thanked the recorder for a job well done but stated the minutes were a little long. The Commission members agreed that more summarization would be better.

3. 2024 Year-to-Date Expenditure Report

- Recorder paid for January 31, 2024 minutes
- Steve Keach, Keach Nordstrom paid for work analyzing project on Brittany Lane
- \$10 paid for the Black Bear Poster – it is at the library and is very nice.
- Kiosk maps paid for
- Member Chretien reimbursed for the rehabilitator program.

4. Draft Master Plan Update: Vision and Priorities for Conservation – Karen McFadden – postponed until next meeting

As noted above, this presentation has been postponed.

5. SELT/Schafer – 141 Acre Conservation Project Update: Timeline of Events

Chair Wainwright has posted the legal notice for the public hearing. He explained that Dr. Rick Schafer has been buying land over many decades and has accumulated 141 acres in six or seven parcels. They are located south of Freshwater Farms down to Oak Ridge. It is Dr. Schafer’s intention that they remain open and wild forever and he has decided to donate all the parcels to the Southeast Land Trust. Chair Wainwright will be giving the Board of Selectmen a presentation on Monday. Chair Wainwright invited the Board of Selectmen members for a walk in the woods on Saturday but has not gotten a response. There is also a presentation on the new police station on Saturday so that may be why. Selectman Ex-Officio Worden offered to speak to the Selectmen after the presentation on the new police station and offer to take them on a hike through the land. It has been a goal of the Conservation Commission to conserve the land since before 1998.

Chair Wainwright made reference to the SELT map and Memorandum (attached), which he previously distributed to the members in which SELT's plans for the Schafer land are presented. No concerns were expressed.

Chair Wainwright read the public hearing notice into the minutes and it will be attached. Vice Chair Steele, Member Nenart, Alternate Pitts and Member Chrétien will attend. Ms. Becky Schafer is flying up from Texas, Mr. Duane Hyde from SELT and Chair Wainwright will attend the public hearing. It will be 7:00 PM Thursday, March 14, 2024 at Atkinson Town Hall.

Chair Wainwright asked for questions.

Alternate Cannon asked how much say the Conservation Commission would have in the trails. She was informed that they would not have any because the trails are owned by SELT. Alternate Cannon asked if SELT would be maintaining the Ridge trail and was informed it was not on the map given to the Conservation Commission. A decision has not been made on signs. SELT has its own trail sign protocol. The Town has no legal say on how SELT uses the land.

Alternate Cannon reported that two women from Exeter Environmental were walking the Schafer land looking for hazardous material. Alternate Cannon stated there were a few trash bags on the far south and she would remove them.

Chair Wainwright informed the viewers that the money to purchase the land comes from the conservation fund which the Commission has obtained from the land use change tax and saved over the past many years. The funding to conserve the property will not raise property taxes.

The Commission discussed possible maintenance to the Schafer trails by SELT. One project is removing the swing and another is replacing the roof on the covered bridge.

6. 50th Celebration: Plans, Publicity, and logistics; video?

There was a meeting of the 50th Celebration Committee and a few things were discussed. The Committee would like to have the photo contest during the month of April and have voting in June. Contestants will be divided into two groups from the elementary school: second grade and younger and 3rd, 4th and 5th grades. Then middle school age and high school groups. The Committee will reach out to the Town to ask if a display and some type of voting could be put up in Town Hall with the pictures. Photos have to be taken on Conservation Land and in Atkinson. It is the goal of the Committee to have people get out to Conservation Land. Only pictures of nature will be allowed in the contest.

Member Nenart has reached out to the Historical Society and they are interested in doing a couple of mutual programs for Atkinson Day. Member Nenart is concerned this might be difficult because he believes the Historical Society will be at the Commons and the Conservation Commission will be at Pope. Member Nenart reported that the possibility of something at Pulpit Rock was also discussed with the Historical Society. A program involving the Sawyer Town Forest combining the research the Historical Society has done with what the Conservation Commission has done with the trails was discussed.

Member Nenart informed the Commission that Member Newman would like to have members of the Commission stationed along the trails on Take-A-Hike Day October 19, 2024 in order to lead some hikes with Atkinson residents.

7. Trails, Map Printing, Orr Site Walk, Crown Hill discussions, anything else?

Chair Wainwright informed Commission members that he received a phone call today from a woman regarding the spelling of Caroline Orr. The woman was a former Trinity Camp camper and counselor. Chair Wainwright suggested that the spelling of the name be checked when the maps and signs are redone on the Caroline Orr Conservation Land. Chair Wainwright also informed the Commission that there is a Facebook page for former Trinity campers. The woman who contacted him informed him that the pond by the Community Center is manmade. He suggested the Historical Society contact her for interviews. The woman also has a great many color slides of Trinity Camp.

Chair Wainwright stated that the kiosk maps are up on Stickney and Marshall. Most people feel paper maps are not necessary, but some people still need them. Chair Wainwright suggested some paper maps be printed, but not as many as before and left at the Library and Town Hall. Alternate Pitts believes people will not come to Town Hall for maps, it would be better to have paper maps at the kiosks. The Commission agreed to continue printing maps.

Alternate Cannon has been communicating with the Plaistow Conservation Commission regarding a trail in the Crown Hill area. It is partly on Plaistow land and partly on Atkinson land. Some people have requested it be closed, but it can only be closed off on the Atkinson portion. Plaistow will not allow the portion of the trail on its land to be closed. Alternate Cannon does not think it is worth it to close the trail because it just connects back from Plaistow. The Commission also discussed what color to mark some of the trails on the map. Chair Wainwright suggested walking the trail when the weather is nicer. Alternate Cannon pointed out one trail from Hampstead that loops through Atkinson and suggested using their markers for continuity. The Commission continued to discuss marking trails. They also discussed blocking some trails.

Vice Chair Steele mentioned that there were some trees across some of the trails at Sawyer and he will go out there when he gets a chance. Member Nenart stated that there has been a lot of ATV activity on Sawyer. Some of it is coming from Haverhill.

Part of the Haverhill land abutting Atkinson is becoming part of Essex County Greenbelt. Parsonage Hill will also be Essex County Greenbelt. There are two parcels that will remain privately owned, one is owned by Lewis Builders and the other by Mr. Harvey. Essex County Greenbelt is a land trust in Essex County Massachusetts. The other side of Parsonage Hill is owned by Haverhill Conservation.

Alternate Pitts asked if anyone had a chance to walk the Caroline Orr parcel. The Commission agreed to set a date.

Secretary Fournier informed the Commission that someone who lives near the Caroline Orr parcel had contacted him about helping out with maintenance. He will contact the person and have them contact Alternate Pitts.

Alternate Pitts requested to return to Sawyer and asked if there was any funding to repair trails because some of them are in very bad shape. Member Nenart stated that the trail at the back of the property needs to be moved because it is not on Atkinson Conservation property. Secretary Fournier informed the Commission that there are grants available from the Recreational Trails grant to repair existing trails. The Commission has received \$62,000 from them to upgrade trails in Slade Forest to be accessible. Secretary Fournier believes that a \$10,000-\$15,000 grant would be needed to repair the trails in Sawyer. Member Nenart stated that he can build log bridges and he has material from the last bridge he built. He would like to know if there are any regulations. Alternate Pitts stated that he has nearly completed the map for Sawyer Forest and should be able to show it to the Commission at the next meeting.

8. Slade Accessible Trail – redesign plan, timeline, and to-do list - John

Secretary Fournier reviewed slides of the accessible trail for the Commission – see attached. Mr. Ted Stewart has completed Phase I. He has been authorized to work on Phase II and cut trees for Phase III. Chair Wainwright asked for an invoice for his work.

The trail will no longer cross the stream. The area is too wet now. The architect drew the trail during a drought. The belt trail to make a shorter loop will be removed. The trail connecting to the condominiums will be for construction and first responder access. Secretary Fournier will attend the next Settler's Ridge board meeting. He was informed that they will grant access as long as it is acceptable to Hampstead Area Water Company. HAWC has already agreed and offered labor.

Alternate Pitts stated that he would like the observation platform moved over because the duck box is extremely active. The duck box on Sawmill is also active. The one at Woodlock was vandalized.

Secretary Fournier also stated there are regulations related to recreational trails near wetlands and raising stone walls. He is considering raising the stone wall rather than building a deck. Permits would be needed. He will consult with DES. Chair Wainwright suggested having Steve Keach survey the area and lay it out on a survey plan to verify where the wetland narrows to less than 50 feet because that is where prime wetland ends. The bridge is 2 feet from the flags and has to be greater than 100 feet from prime wetland. Relief from the October 15th turtle date will also be required.

Chair Wainwright stated that the most immediate issue within the next five days is the AARP grant. He would like the information by Sunday. The grant must be submitted by 4:00 PM on Wednesday. The grant will be for the parking lot. If the Commission gets the AARP grant, the money will not be received until June. The RTP grant from New Hampshire could be signed in July, but work could wait for months.

Secretary Fournier will work with Mr. Stewart on plans for the parking lot and the AARP grant and asked if a vote is needed for the trail re-design. The Commission reached a consensus to allow Secretary Fournier to go forward with the redesigned trail plan. There was no vote.

Chair Wainwright reminded Secretary Fournier that he needed a complete plan including a list of tasks for the phases and a time line for the AARP grant by Sunday.

9. Short Reports and Discussions

a. NHACC Board of Director's Report – Photo Contest

Chair Wainwright informed the Commission that the NHACC Board of Directors is going over policies and procedures.

The photo contest has started and there are already 8 entries. Chair Wainwright requested more entries. It is a great opportunity to get out in nature. There is a \$250 prize in each of three categories. There is a separate category for cell phones. The idea is to get people out in the woods, connect with nature and learn about the conservation lands in their area.

b. Other Business

Selectman Ex-Officio Worden reminded commission members that there is a town budget that needs to be passed at the March elections. He requested all members to vote in favor. Otherwise, the Board of Selectmen will be faced with a \$400,000 deficit.

His first priority is ambulance and fire service, second is police service and third is making sure roads are plowed. After that anything can be cut.

Alternate Pitts stated that there is a video of bluebirds on the Atkinson page. He is hoping to do something with the wood duck boxes so people can see the progress.

10. Schafer Woods Public Hearing – 7:00 PM Thursday, March 14, 2024

11. Hold the Date:

- Memorial Day Parade – Monday, May 27th
- Atkinson Day – Saturday, September 7th
- Take a Hike Day – Saturday, October 19th (rain date Sunday, October 20th)
- NHACC Annual Conference – Saturday, November 2nd

12. Next Regular Meetings – February 28 and March 27, 2024

13. Adjournment

There was no more discussion. Chair Wainwright requested a motion to adjourn.

Member Nenart made a motion to adjourn. Secretary Fournier seconded the motion. Vote: 7/0/0. All in favor.

Chair Wainwright adjourned the February 28, 2024 meeting of the Atkinson Conservation Commission at 8:27 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Karen Wemmelmann, Recording Clerk

Attachments:

- a. Expenditures Report
- b. Schafer Land map
- c. Memorandum from SELT about their plans for the Schafer land
- d. Legal Notice for SELT/Schafer land purchase public hearing
- e. Slade trails proposed redesign
- f. List of proposed SLADE changes

Town of Atkinson Conservation Commission 2024 Expenditure Tracking

Account Number	Description	TM Approved 2024 Budget	What	Amount	Date Prepared	Date Submitted	Amount Submitted	YTD Total	YTD Unspent
			Rounding				\$ -		
	2023 Rate: 21.50								
	2022 Rate: 19.00								
			January 31 Minutes	6	2/8/2024	2/8/2024	\$129.00		
			December 2023 Minutes	2	1/16/2024	1/16/2024	\$43.00		
			November 2023 Minutes	4	1/16/2024	1/16/2024	\$86.00	\$ 258.00	
			Budget Adjustment - removed			00/00/2020			
46110.110.00	RECORDING CLERK	\$ 1,418.00	Budget Adjustment - removed						\$ 1,160.00
			Rounding				\$ -		
	Rate: 0.062								
			January 31 Minutes		2/8/2024	2/8/2024	\$8.00		
			December 2023 Minutes		1/16/2024	1/16/2024	\$2.67		
			November 2023 Minutes		1/16/2024	1/16/2024	\$5.33	\$ 16.00	
			Budget Adjustment - removed			12/17/2019			
46110.220.00	FICA .062	\$ 88.00	Budget Adjustment - removed					\$ -	\$ 72.00
			Rounding				\$ -		
	Rate: 0.0145								
			January 31 Minutes		2/8/2024	2/8/2024	\$1.87		
			December 2023 Minutes		1/16/2024	1/16/2024	\$0.62		
			November 2023 Minutes		1/16/2024	1/16/2024	\$1.25	\$ 3.74	
			Budget Adjustment - removed			12/17/2019		\$ -	
46110.225.00	Medicare .0145	\$ 21.00	Budget Adjustment - removed					\$ -	\$ 17.26
			Steve Keach - 7 Brittany analysis		2/5/2024	2/5/2024	\$297.50		
			Marc Jacobs - 7 Brittany Permit Review		1/17/2024	1/17/2024	\$130.00		
			Steve Keach - Sawyer Culvert		1/15/2024	1/15/2024	\$470.25	\$ 897.75	
			Budget Adjustment - added			12/16/2019		\$ -	
46110.390.00	OTHER PROF SERVICES	\$ 2,550.00	Budget Adjustment - added					\$ -	\$ 1,652.25
			Hamp P&C - Black Bear poster		2/21/2024	2/22/2024	\$10.00		
			Hamp P&C - Kiosk maps for Stickney & Marshall		2/1/2024	2/1/2024	\$77.70	\$ 87.70	
			Budget Adjustment - Added			12/17/2019		\$ -	
46110.550.00	PRINTING AND BINDING	\$ 1,500.00	Budget Adjustment - removed					\$ -	\$ 1,412.30
			Budget Adjustment - removed			12/16/2019		\$ -	
46110.560.00	Dues & Subscriptions	\$ 500.00	Budget Adjustment - removed					\$ -	\$ 500.00
			Budget Adjustment - removed			12/16/2019		\$ -	
46110.620.00	OFFICE SUPPLIES	\$ 1.00	Budget Adjustment - removed					\$ -	\$ 1.00
			Budget Adjustment - removed					\$ -	
			Budget Adjustment - Added			12/17/2019		\$ -	
46110.625.00	POSTAGE	\$ 1.00	Budget Adjustment - added					\$ -	\$ 1.00
			Budget Adjustment - added					\$ -	
	Jim Lavoie							\$ -	
	Was: CARE OF GROUNDS							\$ -	
46110.650.00	Groundskeeping	\$ 3,500.00	Budget Adjustment - removed			12/15/2019		\$ -	\$ 3,500.00
			Budget Adjustment - removed					\$ -	
			Budget Adjustment - removed			12/15/2019		\$ -	
46110.740.00	NEW EQUIPMENT	\$ 300.00	Budget Adjustment - removed					\$ -	\$ 300.00
	2022 rate per mile: 0.625							\$ -	
46110.820.00	MILEAGE	\$ 1.00	Budget Adjustment - removed			12/15/2019		\$ -	\$ 1.00
			Monique - Reimbursement - 2/1 library program		2/2/2024	2/2/2024	\$159.00		
			Scott - Reimbursement - Seedlings		1/23/2024	1/23/2024	\$235.00	\$ 394.00	
			Budget Adjustment - removed			12/15/2019		\$ -	
46110.840.00	SPECIAL PROGRAMS	\$ 1,500.00	Budget Adjustment - removed					\$ -	\$ 1,106.00
			Budget Adjustment - Added			12/17/2019		\$ -	
46110.850.00	EDUCATION & CONFERENCES	\$ 600.00	Budget Adjustment - added					\$ -	\$ 600.00
			Budget Adjustment - added					\$ -	
			Budget Adjustment			12/17/2019		\$ -	
46110.875.00	SIGNS	\$ 500.00	Budget Adjustment - added					\$ -	\$ 500.00
			Budget Adjustment - added					\$ -	
	TOTALS	\$ 12,480.00						\$ 1,657.19	\$ 10,822.81

Route 111



Island Pond Rd.



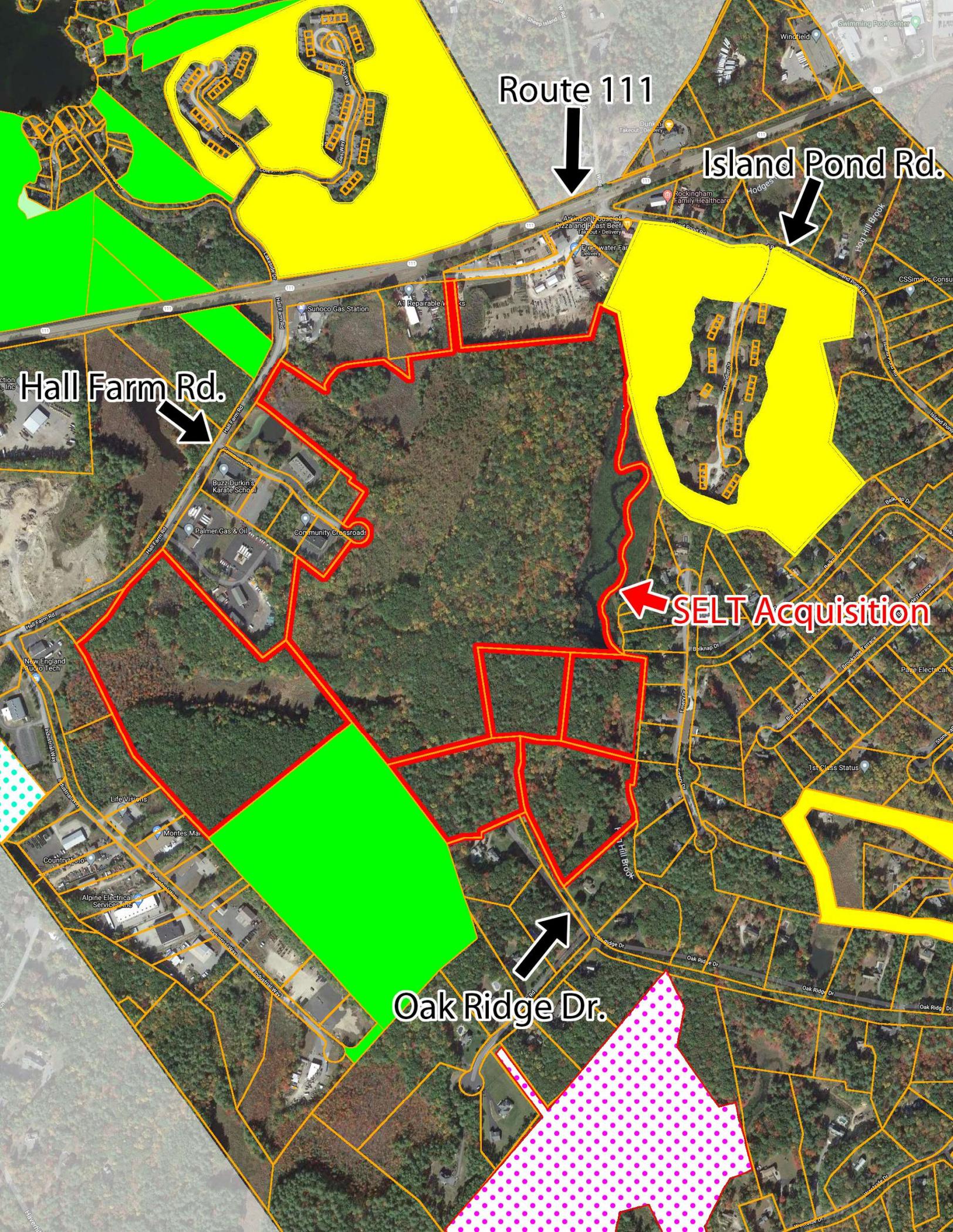
Hall Farm Rd.



SELT Acquisition



Oak Ridge Dr.



MEMORANDUM

TO: Atkinson Conservation Commission

FROM: Duane Hyde, Land Conservation Director, SELT

DATE: February 23, 2024

RE: Schafer Woods-Covered Bridge Forest Conservation Project

SELT has been actively working with Becky Schafer as Trustee of the Rick A. Schafer 2019 Irrevocable Trust on an incredibly generous donation of the approximately 141-acre Schafer property located near/along Oak Ridge Drive, Commerce Drive, Hall Farm Road, and Kipkam Road and shown on the Atkinson Tax Maps as Tax Maps as Map 16, Lot 12; Map 16, Lot 13; Map 16, Lot 21; Map 16, Lot 22; Map 16, Lot 68; and Map 20, Lot 7 (see attached maps). Becky has asked that the property be named "Schafer Woods", but in the early stages of the project she preferred to keep the family name anonymous, and we utilized Covered Bridge Forest as an interim name given the bridge on the property that crosses Hog Hill Brook. The property was managed and owned by Rick Schafer who many of you may know and who sat on the Conservation Commission for several years. Rick and Chet Ladd (founding member of the Conservation Commission in 1974) constructed and invested countless hours to develop and maintain a spectacular trail system on the property and Rick spent 40 years assembling the various parcels that make up this approximately 141-acres.

The purpose of this memo is to update you on the project and work to date, the conservation features of the property, the project structure, discuss budget and request for Atkinson Conservation Commission Conservation Fund support.

Conservation Features

Commission members may be well aware of the conservation values of the Schafer property and you may be able to share some additional information with me at your meeting; however, below is a summary of the conservation attributes SELT has identified in its evaluation of the property.

Water resources:

- There is approximately 2,745 feet of Hog Hill Brook which flows through the property which includes a nearly 6.3-acre portion of a larger ponded area. The brook has excellent forested buffer protecting water quality and providing excellent wildlife habitat. There is also approximately 3,490 feet of a tributary to Hog Hill Brook that flows through Schafer Woods.
- There are approximately 23-acres of National Wetland Inventory mapped wetlands on the property including open water wetlands, scrub-shrub wetlands, and forested wetlands.
- An approximately 7.5-acre portion of a 17.5-acre Atkinson Prime Wetlands is located on the property.
- Along Hog Hill Brook there is approximately 8-acres of Army Corps of Engineers mapped 100-year floodplain.

- 102-acres of the property is in a NH DES High Priority Water Supply Lands area and is also within the Well Head Protection Areas of 4 wells that serve nearby residential neighborhoods and commercial/industrial complexes.

Wildlife & Conservation Plans:

- The property has very good conservation context as it is abutting the 33-acre Judge Marshall Town Forest owned by the Town of Atkinson, abuts the 32-acre Waterwheel Estates Open Space, is across Hall Farm Road from a 1-acre parcel owned by the Town and the 26-acre Ruth Stickney Town Forest which in turn abuts a large block of Town of Hampstead Conservation Lands and Big Island Pond. Downstream on Hog Hill Brook a short distance is the recently completed 37-acre SELT Killam Conservation easement which was completed with funding from the Conservation Commission's Conservation Fund.
- My understanding is this is the largest contiguous parcel of undeveloped land remaining in Atkinson.
- 90-acres of the property is within a Wildlife Connectivity Corridor identified through The Nature Conservancy's Connect the Coast report which identified key remaining wildlife corridors of regional significance.
- The Merrimack Valley Regional Conservation Plan identified 107 acres of the property as "High Scoring" for conservation and 1.5 acres as "Higher Scoring".
- NH Fish & Game Department Wildlife Action Plan identified 23-acres of the property as Supporting Landscape for wildlife.
- Although there has not been a comprehensive vernal pool inventory of the property, it appears based on several site walks that there are several likely productive vernal pools on the property.
- Approximately 105-acres of the (74%) property is identified as having high productivity forest soils (Important Forest Soils Group 1) and the property has what appears to be a mixed history of management with a large area that appears to have been clear cut and is now dense black/grey birch stand and other portions of the property that have a very mature forest with diverse forest structure and species composition. Dominant tree species are oak-pine-hickory and hemlock.
- The property has decent climate resiliency features with approximately 118-acres ranked as average and 19-acres as slightly above average.

Recreational Resources:

- The property includes a very well-constructed and designed trail system with approximately 2.4 miles of trails. The trails include well-constructed bridges, gravel surface in areas that required supplemental materials, culverts, cut slopes, and even an impressive covered bridge. The trail system even has signs with trail names. There are beautiful vantage points and views of Hog Hill Brook and the pond from the trail system. Rick and now Becky Schafer have allowed the public to walk and enjoy this land. The trail system was constructed by Rick Schafer and Chet Ladd.

Conservation Structure-Ownership

Becky Schafer has agreed to donate this 141-acre property to SELT. Thus, SELT will be responsible to own and manage Schafer Woods as conservation land that will remain open for the public to enjoy its trails and resources. The Pledge Agreement signed for the donation puts the following stipulations on this very generous donation:

- The property be named “Schafer Woods”.
- If hunting is allowed, it shall be by bow and arrow only. SELT allows hunting on the vast majority of its ownership and our initial thinking is to allow hunting subject to this condition.
- SELT will limit forest management disturbance within that portion of the property visible from 12 Emery Drive for as long as Rick Schafer resides there.

SELT’s standard operating procedure is to pay property taxes on its properties at the Current Use rate.

SELT has prepared a draft trail plan for the property that mapped all of the existing trails on the property (see attached map). Some of the trails shown on the map were less improved/used whereas others had the care and attention to detail described above. The attached draft trail plan, which was reviewed in the field with several members of the Conservation Commission, shows SELT’s plans to keep and maintain approximately 2.2 miles of trails and another 0.2 miles that we don’t plan to maintain, but will remain open. The remaining 0.3 miles will be blocked off/closed. The blocked off trails either go to inaccessible areas, are of lower quality trail, and/or impact sensitive resources.

SELT plans to construct a small, approximately 4-6 vehicle parking area, off of Oak Ridge Drive in an area that was cleared (possibly for a subdivision that never occurred?) and where material storage has occurred for the maintenance of the trail system. Based upon our site walk with representatives from the Commission and SELT staff, we determined the best location for the parking is relatively flat area in close proximity/next to Oak Ridge Road so the parking area will be visible from the road and also minimize disruption to the neighboring properties. The parking area would include a sign, kiosk with trail map/information, and the trail head to access the system. SELT has a full-time trail manager that will be responsible for overseeing the maintenance and upkeep of the trails and parking area and we have an existing volunteer corps that we hope we can supplement with local Atkinson volunteers to help maintain what we hope will be a beloved trail system for the community. SELT also has a full-time land manager/forester that will prepare a management plan for the property and oversee the forest and resource management issues for Schafer Woods.

Due Diligence

SELT is managing the due diligence for the project. We have underway:

1. Boundary survey. Surveyor has been hired and we expect to have the boundary survey completed by the end of May. The surveyor will paint and blaze the boundary and SELT will put up boundary signs.
2. Phase 1 Environmental Hazard Assessment. Has been ordered and we should have the report in the next month.
3. Title Research. Has been ordered and I expect to receive it in the very near future.

We have learned as part of our due diligence that the NHDES Dam Bureau considers the impoundment that forms the pond along Hog Hill Brook to be a dam. Previous site walks by SELT staff led us to believe it was a stone area potentially associated with an old mill or stonewall that has been plugged by beaver activity. The dam is considered a “non-menace” dam by NHDES and thus it is not required to have a management plan, emergency plan, and nor does it require an annual registration fee. There is some question as to whether the impoundment meets the technical definition requirements of a dam by the State, so SELT is having our surveyor take the measurements required by NHDES.

There is also a small area that requires cleanup near the covered bridge/dam along Hog Hill Brook where there is a metal canoe storage rack, several dilapidated canoes/paddle boat, small children's playhouse, and other debris. SELT will work to have this area cleaned up after closing.

Our hope and plan is to close and accept this wonderful land gift in June 2024 or possibly early July.

Budget

Even though the Schaffer's are generously donating this property, there are still project related costs and long-term costs that must be funded to complete the project. The estimated total budget for the Schafer Woods is \$196,790.

The budget includes SELT Project Management Costs for managing and working on the project. SELT tracks its project management costs for each project it works on and categorizes the projects based upon the structure/funding sources. Based on several prior larger land donation projects with limited number of outside funding sources the Schafer project falls into a \$7,000 Project Management cost category. The Land Management Fund calculation is based upon the size/features of the property, property taxes, insurance, repairing/maintaining improvements, maintaining trails, and the amount of staff time it will require to manage the property and the volunteers. SELT has a spreadsheet calculator that it enters data about the project into and it calculates the Land Management Fund necessary to ensure that the organization will have the long-term (permanent) capacity to monitor and manage the property. SELT uses the interest from the Management Fund to pay for our costs of stewarding the property. It is a one-time payment to the Management Fund and we estimate a 4% annual return. Given the extensive trail system, planned parking area, the many bridges/culverts/and covered bridge, the Schafer Woods project requires \$122,000 be placed in SELT's Land Management Fund for the long-term care and monitoring of this property, plus a one-time contribution of \$1,800 to SELT's legal defense fund. There are also capital costs for the improvements to be made including the parking area, signs, kiosk, gates and the forest management plan. The remaining costs in the budget are fairly self-explanatory, but I'd be happy to discuss any questions the Commission may have.

SELT sent out a mailing to Atkinson and Hampstead residents. This generated just under \$10,000 in donations. We hope that the Commission will consider funding the remaining costs to complete this project which is \$187,194. Given what this property is worth, and the amount of money that would be required to purchase this property had we not had such a generous landowner, this is a wonderful and relatively low investment for such a great conservation outcome for the community with SELT taking on the long term obligations of managing the land and trails.

Request to the Commission

Request to provide SELT with \$187,194 toward the Schafer Woods land conservation project

Authorize the Chair of the Conservation Commission to enter into a Letter of Understanding for this funding commitment.

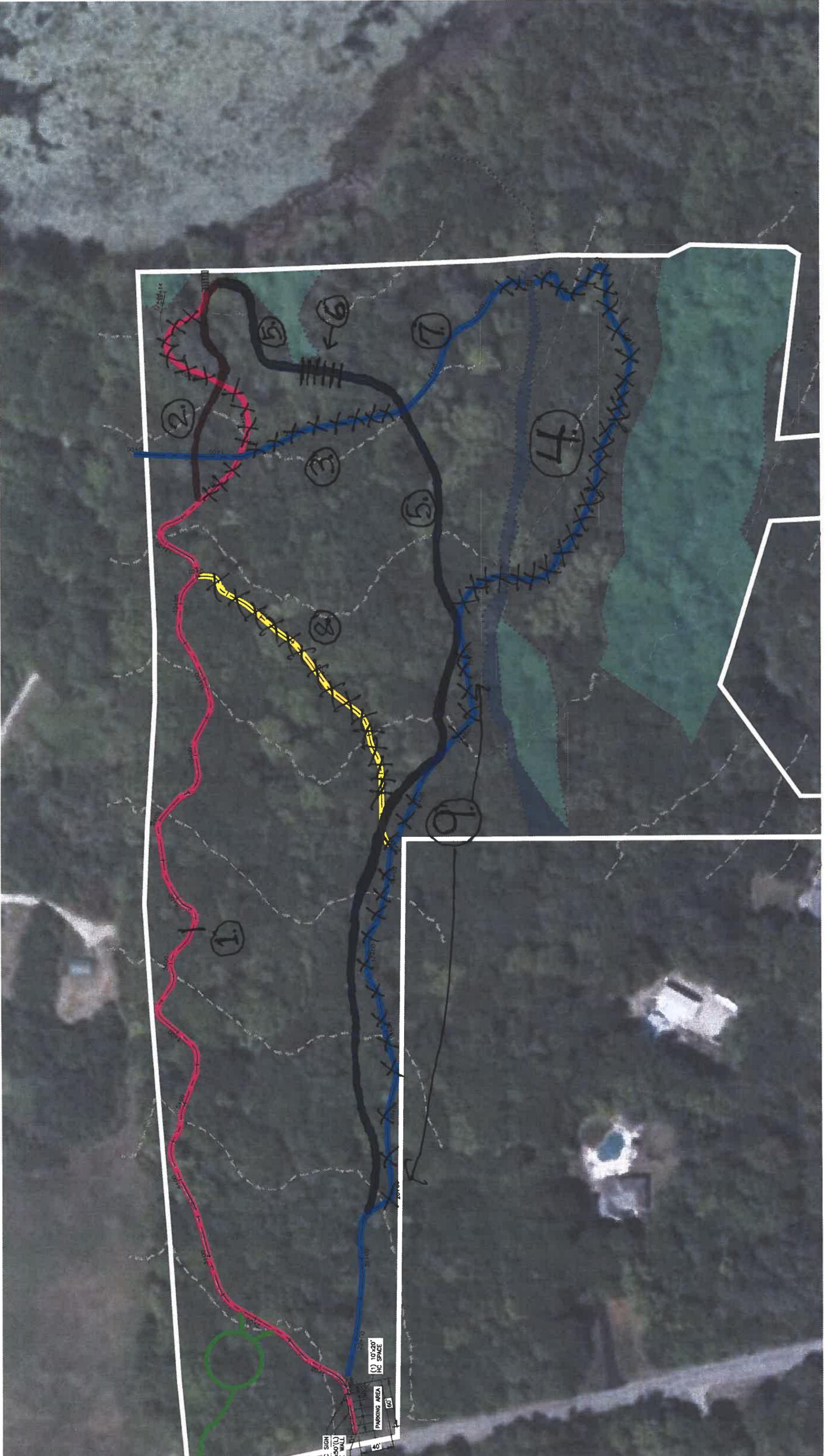
Attachments – Context Map
Aerial Map
Trail Map
Draft Budget

TOWN OF ATKINSON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
19 Academy Avenue
Atkinson, New Hampshire 03811

LEGAL NOTICE
Town of Atkinson, New Hampshire

Pursuant to **NH RSA 36-A:5, II**, the Atkinson Conservation Commission will hold a Public Hearing on Thursday, March 14, 2024 at 7:00 PM in Atkinson Town Hall, 19 Academy Avenue, Atkinson, New Hampshire, to consider expending \$187,194.00 from the Atkinson Conservation Fund, pursuant to **RSA 36-A:4-a, I(b)**, to facilitate the acquisition by the Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire of 141+- acres of land comprised of the following parcels from the Town of Atkinson tax maps: **Map 16, Lot 12; Map 16, Lot 13; Map 16, Lot 21; Map 16, Lot 22; Map 16, Lot 68; and Map 20, Lot 7**. In preparation for this hearing, a site walk of this property will be conducted by the Conservation Commission on Sunday, March 10, 2024 at 1:00 PM, beginning at the end of Oak Ridge Road, Atkinson, and the public is invited to attend.

Atkinson Conservation Commission
Paul Wainwright, Chair
February 29, 2024



AC SIGN
P-30 (U)
WALL
PARKING AREA
10'x20'
HC SPACE
60

1

2

3

8

5

7

4

9

5

6

Proposed changes to Phase 2 and 3 Slade Accessible Trails.

Thanks to all commission members and others who voiced concerns about the architect's original, grand plan for this trail system. I think we all agree that its footprint was too large for this little forest, and it went places that it doesn't make sense to go for various reasons. This revised plan addresses those concerns while also reducing the impact on wildlife habitats.

Numbers keyed to attached, marked-up map (Slade trails map of proposed changes 240228.pdf).

1. End of Pink trail segment upgraded in Phase1, for reference.
2. Re-route of Pink trail to tame the grade to the pond, and to avoid water crossings and the roots of large trees.
3. Remove from plan approximately 220 feet of GPI-proposed Blue trail that is rough, rocky, and wet. Water flows continuously across this segment of the trail. Upgrading it to an accessible surface would require extensive earthwork and 1 or 2 culverts.
4. Eliminate approximately 700 feet of the proposed Blue trail, including the 2 bridges and the trail section on the East side of the stream. There are no good reasons to go there, and countless reasons not to.
5. Proposed new route of Blue trail, staying on the West side of the stream. It will connect with the Pink trail at the pond viewpoint to create a closed loop.
6. A bridge will be required here to cross a seasonal stream within a rocky, U-shaped channel. Much of the water here crosses the original segment of the Blue trail described in item 3. The 16' long bridge is shown larger than scale to make it more visible on the marked-up drawing.
7. Proposed non-accessible, but improved trail segment of approximately 220 feet to maintain connection to off-property trails.
8. The Yellow "Belt" trail will be eliminated entirely, to leave space for wildlife. An inner loop is no longer justifiable now that the length of the outer loop has been reduced.
9. Move Blue trail segments away from private property lines and stream.