

Atkinson Conservation Commission Minutes
Monday March 5, 2018
Atkinson Town Hall

Approved April 2, 2018

Members Present:

Paul Wainwright, Vice Chair
Denise Legault
Pete McVay, Secretary
Dan Kimball
Mark Hertrich

Others Present:

Bill Davidson, NH Division of Forests and Lands
Brent Ebner, Hampstead Conservation Commission
Bob Malo

1. Call to order, attendance

Vice Chair Wainwright called the meeting to order at 7:32 PM, Monday, March 5, 2018. Mr. Wainwright explained that Chair Dziechowski is out with medical issues.

2. Procedural Changes: Vice Chair Paul Wainwright

- An agenda will be posted well before the meeting, usually on the Friday before a Monday meeting.
- Vice Chair Wainwright would like requests to be on the agenda to be sent to the Conservation email address (conservation@atkinson-nh.gov) by the Thursday before the meeting.
- Vice Chair Wainwright will also take attendance and have all members and guests sign in in order to keep accurate records of who appears before the Commission, as required by law.
- There is an opening on tonight's agenda because Tim Lavelle, Lavelle Associates, will not be appearing to discuss the Blunts Pond wetland setback variance application.
- Meetings will be posted on the town's calendar (on the website) and on the bulletin board outside the Selectmen's room. It is important to engage the community.
- Site walks will also be posted as Conservation Commission meetings, and therefore will be open to the public by law.
- Vice Chair Wainwright will not bring a laptop to meetings since he feels it interferes with his ability to lead the meeting. If a laptop is needed, he will ask another member. Member McVay will bring a cable.
- As a goal, meetings will end by 9:00 PM if at all possible. Vice Chair Wainwright asked that commission members not take it personally if he asks them to "move it along" during a discussion.

New Procedure for Minutes:

- The recording clerk will produce a draft set of minutes within a week or so of the meeting and send to the Commission members.
- Vice Chair Wainwright will edit them with his input, and will send this edited copy to Commission members along with the agenda for the next meeting (usually the Friday before a meeting).
- Commission members are asked to read this copy of the minutes and bring their comments to the meeting. There will not be time to read the minutes during the meeting, as has been our practice in the past.
- Once the minutes have been reviewed and approved by the Commission, Vice Chair Wainwright will send the final version to the technology committee to be posted.
- The Commission is now 100% up to date with minutes posted on the web site.

3. Review and approval of minutes: December and February

December 4, 2017

Members Kimball and McVay made a motion to accept the minutes of the December 4, 2017 meeting of the Atkinson Conservation Commission as amended. Member Legault seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Conservation Commission present voted in favor. Vote: 5/0/0.

February 5, 2018

Member Legault made a motion to accept the minutes of the February 5, 2018 as amended. Member McKay seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Conservation Commission present voted in favor. Vote: 5/0/0.

4. Wetland variance application: Map 9, Lot 29 (Blunts Pond): not discussed

5. Emerald Ash Borer updates: Bill Davidson, NH Division of Forests and Lands

Vice Chair Wainwright explained that Mr. Davidson will present a mitigation program for the Emerald Ash Borer infestation in the Sawyer Town Forest.

Mr. Davidson explained that Emerald Ash Borer has been discovered in Atkinson along the western edge of the Sawyer Town Forest, on the Massachusetts border. Mr. Davidson would like to implement a management strategy called Integrated Pest Management (IPM). There is

an area of about 20 acres with a large component of ash and is infested with Emerald Ash Borer. The Champion Ash is in that area. Mr. Davidson stated that he checked the tree and it looks healthy. There are two main infestations in the state, one around Concord and one around the Salem/Pelham/Atkinson area that has become infested from Massachusetts. The IPM program uses three different management approaches.

One approach is to use insecticides to treat the largest and most significant trees. Another approach is to remove and destroy heavily infested trees. The last step is to use biological controls. The infested trees can be left standing but the best method is to fell the trees and to chip them. Chipping the wood is enough to kill the beetles.

Biological control is a process where natural enemies of the Emerald Ash Borer which have been identified from its native range are brought in. [Mr. Davidson described a category of wasp that feeds on the Emerald Ash borer insect.] The wasps are very small and not a harm to humans. They have been screened and they will have no adverse effects. USDA has a national program where they release the wasps across the country, which started in 2006. New Hampshire has started using them in 2014. The NH Department of Forestry has done about a dozen sites and just finished a program in Salem.

There are three species of wasps that can be used for biological control. Mr. Davidson showed the Conservation Commission pictures of the wasps. The smallest wasp is less than a millimeter and the largest is three millimeters. There is a facility in Michigan which produces the wasps and sends them out. They are from Northern China and Eastern Russia and have done very well here. They are very small and stingless and no threat to humans. Releasing is a two-year process. Mr. Davidson would pick 10-12 trees as release trees. He would come out once a week in the summer and hang the wasp larvae on the trees. It is a long-term approach. The goal is to establish the wasps along the edge of the infestations so that the wasps can spread along with the Emerald Ash Borer. Mr. Kimball asked if volunteers are needed. Mr. Davidson explained that he gets wood samples and if the tree is infested, he drives to the site and hangs wasp larvae so he does not need volunteers. Mr. Davidson has not seen a lot of damage in Atkinson, except for that one section of the Town Forest and a few other areas. The large trees become infested first. Unless they are treated, any standing ash tree will be killed. For landscape trees, the insecticide used by the NH Division of Forest and Lands can be purchased by the public. It has to be applied by an arborist with an expensive piece of equipment. All the information is on the web site, NHbugs.org. Member Kimball asked who to call if someone finds infested trees on their property. Mr. Davidson suggested they call the State. Infested trees can be cut down and used for personal firewood but should not be moved without a compliance agreement. There is a quarantine on personal firewood so it should be kept local so as not to spread the beetle around.

Vice Chair Wainwright asked Mr. Davidson what was needed to be done for the Atkinson Town Forest. Mr. Davidson explained that his office wants Conservation Commission permission and his office can handle the program. The major portion of the program would be releasing wasp larvae weekly for two years. The third year, his office would perform evaluations which consists of cutting trees down and peeling them to look for wasp larvae. Also, some cut wood from the trees would be placed in barrels with jars attached so the wasps will fly into the jars to be collected. There will also be chemical treating and cutting. Chemical treating needs to be done once every three years. The first round of application would occur this summer. He would go out and treat about fifteen of the most prominent trees. The Champion Ash would be a candidate for treatment. The wasps, unfortunately are a long-term prevention method. They do not get established quickly enough to protect infested trees. The goal for that method is to protect regenerated forest trees.

Vice Chair Wainwright asked about cutting. Mr. Davidson explained that the infestation is heaviest at the access point on the western side of the forest. He would come out with another person and a chain saw, cut the most heavily infested trees, bring in a chipper and chip them. Mr. McVay remarked that the chips would make good trail mulch.

Vice Chair Wainwright asked about time frame and cost. Mr. Davidson explained that it would take a day or two to treat the most prominent trees in the spring, another day or two to cut and chip the most infested trees and two to three days weekly to release the wasps. The NH Forestry Department can cover the cost of treating the most prominent trees and releasing the wasps but said he might need some help procuring a chipper. Vice Chair Wainwright stated the Conservation Commission could rent a chipper. Mr. Kimball asked about the diameter of the trees and Mr. Davidson explained that they are from 5-12 inches in diameter. He also explained that they can also be identified by woodpecker holes. Mr. Kimball asked about the chemical used for treatment and if there is a hazard to wildlife. Mr. Davidson explained that the chemical is Triage G4 and that holes are drilled at the base of the tree and the chemical is injected into the trees. Member Legault asked if there was an issue with trees next to wetlands. Mr. Davidson explained that when the leaves drop there is a small potential risk but the chemical dissipates quickly. The wasps have been released in Michigan since 2006, most of the standing trees have been killed but new growth remains healthy. Member Legault asked about the chemical and Mr. Davidson explained that there is not a long history of chemical treatment.

Vice Chair Wainwright polled the Board.

Member Hertrich made a motion to allow the New Hampshire Department of Forestry to proceed with an Emerald Ash Borer mitigation program in the Atkinson Town Forest. Member Kimball seconded the motion.

Discussion: Vice Chair Wainwright asked that if money is needed to rent a chipper, Mr. Davidson return to the Conservation Commission. Vice Chair Wainwright also asked for a report prior to the meeting to be read to the Conservation Commission and that meetings are generally the first Monday of the month, and Mr. Davidson agreed. Vice Chair Wainwright asked that language be put in the motion.

If funding is needed to rent a chipper, Mr. Davidson will return to the Conservation Commission and will give a report prior to each monthly meeting to be read to the Conservation Commission.

All members of the Atkinson Conservation Commission present voted in favor. Vote: 5/0/0.

Mr. Davidson also explained that there about a dozen sites where the wasps have been released and there are trees in downtown Concord that have been treated with the chemical and it has worked very well.

6. Emergency Services trail signage updates: Pete McVay

Brent Ebner, Hampstead Conservation Commission gave the report.

A company has been selected to develop the maps. There are some cost estimates on the last page of the report for the different phases and steps. The split for the cost will be 45% Hampstead, 45% Plaistow and 10% Atkinson, which is roughly proportional to the complexity of the trails in those three towns. The pilot area is the section off East Road In between East Road, Rte. 111 and Rte. 121A. All information will be included if the Conservation Commission wants to put up trail signage in other areas.

The junction markers will be put on 4x4 posts and will have a fiberglass marker consisting of a number and a letter. All the costs will be finalized once Mr. Ebner has a chance to survey the trails. There will be a delay due to the snow. Neatline Associates will be the contractor. Her turnaround will be about a month. Mr. Ebner will identify all the junctions and trails, the Town lines, bridges and landmarks for the project.

A parking area will be put in at Mr. Ebner's driveway and Mr. Ebner asked the Conservation Commission if they would like to put in a kiosk. It could be an Eagle Scout project. The cost will be determined by the size of the map.

Vice Chair Wainwright explained that funding is not an issue, the issue for the Conservation Commission is the labor. The \$457 is the 10% mapping cost for Atkinson. The other costs are for the posts, the markers and paint for blazes. The trails will be blazed and marked with an "A" for Atkinson, an "H" for Hampstead and a "P" for Plaistow.

Mr. Ebner also explained that he has a small tractor with a backhoe that can be used to set the posts for Atkinson. He also has some mountain bike friends that will help. He is planning to go to East Coast Lumber to purchase the posts with either the Atkinson or the Hampstead Conservation Commission budget. Vice Chair Wainwright stated that the Atkinson Conservation Commission will pay for the expenses of setting the posts in Atkinson.

Vice Chair Wainwright asked to be kept up to date about the cost and timeline. Mr. Ebner explained that he can map the trails on a weekend and start putting in the posts once mud season is over. A map is not needed for the posts because a junction is a junction. There will be no coordinates for the junction markers, they will just be numbered. The mapping contractor explained that it will be easy to map the markers. The junctions will be numbered with odd numbers and even numbers can be used later if additional trails are added.

Vice Chair Wainwright asked about total cost for Atkinson. Mr. Ebner explained that Atkinson only has around 5 junctions. The biggest cost would be the trail mapping of about \$460 and the total cost would be under \$1,000.

Member Kimball suggested that a line item be added for trail maintenance. Mr. Ebner suggested that trail users would be the best volunteers.

7. Eagle Project Status Report: Mark Hertrich

Member Hertrich did not have an update.

8. 2018 NH Proposed Bills of interest to Conservation: Denise Legault

A bill is being proposed to repeal the State Timber Tax. It is House Bill 14-70. Vice Chair Wainwright explained that the Conservation Commission does not pay a timber tax. Mr. Kimball explained that the Timber Tax came about so land owners would not have to pay property tax on the value of the trees on their land every year, only when it was harvested.

State Bill 12-10 – would establish a committee to study the effect of the current use tax.

Vice Chair Wainwright informed the Commission that there is also a wetlands rules update in process. Information about this is in the Commission's email inbox.

9. Organization of Conservation Land Records: Paul Wainwright

Vice Chair Wainwright stated that he would be reviewing and organizing the Conservation Commission files. Vice Chair Wainwright would like to digitize some of the records and has purchased a scanner.

Vice Chair Wainwright requested a motion.

Member Kimball made a motion to reimburse Vice Chair Wainwright \$129.98 for the cost of a scanner to digitize Conservation Commission documents. Member Hertrich seconded the motion.

Discussion: Mr. Wolff asked if the scanner in the Town office could be used instead, and Vice Chair Wainwright replied that the scanner he purchased has an automatic document feeder that makes it easy to scan documents, is easily portable, is powered via the USB cable from a laptop, and comes with software to convert paper text documents into editable files (such as MS Word).

All members of voted in favor. Vote: 5/0/0.

10. Other business:

Vice Chair Wainwright informed the Commission that he has read the minutes from all the Conservation Commission meetings for the past year. He would like to recognize Mr. Dziechowski for the work he has done.

Vice Chair Wainwright also reported that the resolution passed regarding hunting blinds (June 2017) was that ground blinds were permitted but tree blinds were not. There has been some confusion about this, as recorded in subsequent meeting minutes. He requested that the Commission rethink the issue of blinds. The resolution completely ignores blinds used for photography or bird watching. Member McVay suggested the Commission discuss the definition of a ground blind. Member Legault informed the Commission that the Conservation Commission in Methuen has a permanent blind. Member McVay informed the Commission that permanent blinds can be placed but should not be for a specific use and should be planned out. Vice Chair Wainwright thinks a no blinds policy is best, but the issue certainly should be revisited at a future meeting, and no resolution was proposed at this time.

Member McVay requested to discuss programs that will encourage interest in Conservation and the outdoors. Member McVay will research different programs.

Member Hertrich stated that the Scouts may be building a shed at the Community Center and asked if the Conservation Commission was interested.

Vice Chair Wainwright stated that there are two structures already there, a shipping container and two donation boxes which the Forest Society, which holds a Conservation Easement on

the 5-acre Community Center lot, would like to have moved, and suggested that the Scouts build something that is in keeping with the forested area behind the Community Center.

Also, according to Town Administrator Alan Phair, the boundary dispute at the Orr Town Forest has not yet been resolved.

Mr. Ebner showed the Commission the plans from Lavelle Associates for his driveway and the parking area. There is a turnaround for a fire truck. It will be pervious gravel. An easement will be needed for the electric lines and Mr. Hertrich requested that Vice Chair Wainwright sign it.

He would also like to put in a motion activated solar light in the parking area. Plaistow has several drug overdoses in its parking areas every month. He may even put in a camera.

11. Next Meeting(s) & Adjournment

The next regular meeting of the Conservation Commission is Monday, April 2, 2018 at 7:30 PM.

Member McVay made a motion to adjourn the March 5, 2018 meeting of the Atkinson Conservation Commission at 8:47 PM. Member Kimball seconded the motion. All members of the Atkinson Conservation Commission present voted in favor. Vote: 5/0/0.