

Atkinson Conservation Commission Minutes
Monday, March 18, 2019
Atkinson Town Hall

Approved April 1, 2019

Members Present:

Paul Wainwright, Chair
Pete McVay, Secretary
Dan Kimball
Dennis Krause
Jeff Nenart, Alternate (voting)

Others Present:

Dave Kerem
Ty Kerem

1) Call to order, attendance

Chair Wainwright called the meeting to order at 7:33 PM, Monday, March 18, 2019. Chair Wainwright reviewed the attendance list and declared that a quorum was present. Chair Wainwright also stated that the meeting had been properly posted in two places as required by law.

2) Review and Approval of Scholarship Applicant

Chair Wainwright introduced Ty Kerem, who has applied for this year's scholarship to the Junior Conservation Officer session at the Barry Conservation Camp, August 4 – 7, 2019. Ty expressed an appreciation for the town's natural environment, and enthusiasm for learning how to protect our ecologically significant places.

After some discussion, Chair Wainwright requested a motion.

Jeff Nenart made a motion to approve Ty's request for this year's scholarship, and to expend funds for it from the Special Programs line of our annual operating budget. Pete McVay seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously, 5/0/0.

3) Page Farm Perimeter Buffer Encroachment

During last month's Planning Board meeting, the Board asked Chair Wainwright for his feedback on Green & Company's latest plan to cut and excavate in the 100-foot perimeter buffer between their project and the town's conservation land.

Chair Wainwright presented a draft letter on the matter, and after some discussion and minor modifications, Chair Wainwright requested a motion.

Pete McVay made a motion to send the letter to the Atkinson Planning Board expressing the Commission's continuing objection toward allowing Green and Company to cut and excavate in the perimeter buffer. Dan Kimball seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously, 5/0/0.

4) Adjournment

Chair Wainwright requested a motion to adjourn.

Jeff Nenart made a motion to adjourn the March 18, 2019 meeting of the Atkinson Conservation Commission. Pete McVay seconded the motion. All members of the Conservation Commission voted in favor. Vote: 5/0/0.

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 PM.

Attachments:

- Letter to the Planning Board dated March 19, 2019

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

March 19, 2019

Atkinson Planning Board
21 Academy Avenue
Atkinson, NH 03811

Re: Perimeter Buffer Encroachment for the Page Farm Development

Dear Chair –

I am writing to you in our capacity as an advisor to your board in matters that affect the town's environment or its Town Forest lands, as described in RSA 36-A.

The Conservation Commission met in special session on Monday, March 18, 2019, to discuss Midland Investment's latest proposal to cut and excavate in the 100-foot perimeter buffer between their development and a portion of the town's Town Forest. By unanimous vote of the Commission, I am writing to you to express our continuing objection to this encroachment into the buffer.

The Conservation Commission's responsibility for this piece of land (Map 18 Lot 77) is documented both in the deed to that land, and in a vote at town meeting (TM 1986-51) designating the land to be part of the Town Forest. In addition, this land was acquired by the Town with assistance of the Land & Water Conservation Fund, administered by the US Department of the Interior, who require regular condition reports on the health of the land they helped fund. So we speak on their behalf as well.

Taking a long-term view, we feel that development of the additional 7 units on the Page Farm site would have a lasting negative impact on both the public's enjoyment of this conservation land, and especially on the environmental impact on wildlife habitat. It makes no sense to us to make the impact even worse by allowing even a portion of the buffer to be cut and excavated. From our perspective, the only benefit to allowing this would be to increase the profitability of Midland Investments.

Midland Investments has claimed that they will re-plant the area that they propose to excavate, and that, in time, the excavated area will return to the mature forest that exists there today. This seems to us to be a promise that will be impossible to keep. With the placement of several of the homes exactly on the line of the 100-foot buffer, the condo association will want to keep large trees away from these homes, so, from our perspective, the full buffer will never be allowed to return to its forested condition.

We feel strongly that the stated purpose of the buffer “to provide adequate transition between abutting land uses” is just as valid here as for any abutting property that is occupied by homes.

From our perspective, if zoning ordinance 600:11 were intended to apply only to land that is developed – or had the possibility of being developed in the future – it would have said so.

In our advisory capacity in this matter, we urge you to work with Midland Investments to find a solution that does not require encroachment into the buffer. As a suggestion, one possible way to accomplish this would be to simply build fewer homes in this particular area. Acceptance of the current proposal would establish a policy that is not consistent with 600.11 or with the intent expressed by the 2015 Atkinson Master Plan.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at 362-6589.

Sincerely,



Paul Wainwright, Chair, Atkinson Conservation Commission

email: conservation@atkinson-nh.gov

Copy to :

Sue Coppeta, Town of Atkinson Planning and Zoning Administrator