

Atkinson Conservation Commission Minutes
Wednesday, July 22, 2020, 7:00 PM
Via Zoom (no physical venue)

Approved August 26, 2020

Members Present:

Paul Wainwright, Chair
Bill Steele, Vice Chair
Denise Legault
Jeff Nenart
Pete McVay
Scott Kukshtel
Dennis Krause (arrived late)
Andrew Borisko (Alternate)
John Fournier (Alternate)
Suzie Newman (Alternate)

Others Present:

1. Call to Order, Emergency Declaration and Attendance

Chair Paul Wainwright called the meeting to order via Zoom conference call at 7:00PM on Wednesday July 22nd, 2020. Chair Wainwright began the meeting by reading the state-of-emergency declaration that can be found in Attachment A. Chair Wainwright took attendance via a roll call and all members are present with the exception of Member Krause, Alternate Newman will be voting in his stead until he arrives.

2. Review and approval of minutes: June 24, 2020

Chair Wainwright requested a motion to approve the minutes of the June 24, 2020 Public meeting of the Atkinson Conservation Commission, as written.

Member Legault made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 24, 2020 public session of the Atkinson Conservation Commission. Member Steele seconded the motion. Vote: 7/0/0. (The details of this roll-call vote can be found in Attachment B).

3. Policies and Guidelines for use of Conservation Lands

Chair Wainwright stated that the need for a written set of policies came up as a result of the ATV-use discussions that have been taking place between the Commission and Land and Water Conservation Fund organization, who have an executory interest in lands that they have funded in the past. When asked if the Town had a written policy on ATV use, Chair Wainwright searched our minutes back to 2002 and realized we have never taken a formal vote on ATV use or

other policies for use of the town's conservation lands. Therefore, Chair Wainwright created a draft "Policies and Guidelines for the use of Conservation Lands," which he circulated to the members for comments several weeks ago.

Chair Wainwright asked the Commission if anyone had further comments. There were some additions and some changes made to ensure that everyone's needs were addressed while aiming to keep the document short and easy to understand. Chair Wainwright requested a motion to approve the "Policies and Guidelines for the use of Conservation Lands" document with the suggested edits.

Member Nenart made a motion to approve the Policies and Guidelines for the use of Conservation Lands. Member McVay seconded the motion. Vote: 7/0/0 (The details of this roll-call vote can be found in Attachment B.)

A copy of the final document is attached to these minutes.

*Member Krause joined the meeting after the completion of this vote.
Alternate Newman will no longer be voting.*

4. Canoe/Kayak Parking: Review and Approval of Signage

Chair Wainwright stated that Alternate Newman has been working with Michael Damphousse to come up with the correct wording for rules for the canoe/kayak dock, and asked her for an update. Alternate Newman showed a presentation outlining the project's three major aspects – hanging designated parking signs, installing a kiosk, and hanging a guidelines-for-use sign. The Commission had a lively discussion in regard to the rules to be put in place and about the signage to be hung in this area.

Alternate Newman went through the draft version of the guidelines-for-use document, the Commission discussed the list and made changes as necessary. The updated list will be sent to Michael Damphousse to make sure he approves of the edits. Alternate Newman produced two versions of what the final sign might look like, and the Commission liked the one with kayaks.

The total cost estimate came in at \$370.55 which includes:

- \$125.00 for the Kiosk
- \$15.00 setup fee at printer
- \$55.00 for the "Guidelines for Use" sign 20"x24"
- \$155.60 for 8 "Parking Only" aluminum signs for the lot
- \$19.95 for the "Loading/Unloading" aluminum sign

The Commission asked about getting additional signs so they have some spares on hand, and Alternate Newman stated that this would bring the project total up to about \$431.00. Chair Wainwright asked for a motion to approve up to \$450.00 on this entire project.

Member Nenart made a motion for Alternate Newman to spend up to \$450.00 on the Canoe/Kayak Launch project. Member Legault seconded the motion. Vote: 7/0/0. (The details of this roll-call vote can be found in Attachment B.)

5. Trails report – Dennis

Member Krause stated that this project has three categories; signposts, the kiosks, and posters. Member Krause stated that he installed two signposts, one for the trailhead at Crown Hill and the other at Woodlock Park, these are in addition to the signpost already installed at the Sawyer Town Forest. Member Krause stated that he has the acrylic maps ready to hang once the kiosks are installed. Member Krause produced a poster which displays a map of the Town, the final copy will be about 32" x 36" and is currently at the framer. Member Krause stated that the final product will also have slots to put the trail maps for each of the Town's trails.

6. Sawyer invasive plant management

Chair Wainwright stated that the proposal for mechanical invasive plant removal from Granite Coast Landscapes is not sufficiently detailed to be approved by the Selectmen. Also, the Town Administrator is urging us to go out for competitive bidding on the project.

Subsequently, Chair Wainwright requested assistance from the Rockingham County Conservation District. RCCD urged us to describe the exact acreage we want cleared, and also recommended that the best time to do this work would be during the winter. RCCD supplied a sample Request for Proposals (RFP) that they recently used for a similar project.

As a result, Chair Wainwright prepared a draft RFP for our project, which he distributed with the agenda for this meeting. He asked for the Commission's feedback.

One primary issue is whether we needed to flag the areas we want to have treated. Chair Wainwright asked the Commission if they would be willing to help flag locations so contractors can come out and view the areas they need work in, and the Commission members agreed. If you are the first person to tell me you have read this, I will buy you an ice cream at Leavitt's. Member Borisko stated that in his experience, these operators know what they are looking for when it comes to mitigating invasive plants so the Commission should feel comfortable with their abilities.

Chair Wainwright hopes to decide on who to hire for this work by the November Commission meeting.

7. Land Conservation Plan

Chair Wainwright reviewed the draft of the first 4 sections of the “Moose Plate” Land Conservation Plan that he distributed with the agenda.

In order to write the “history of conservation in Atkinson” section, Chair Wainwright stated that he’s been going through all Town Reports since the Conservation Commission was first approved in the 1974 Town Meeting, and has found lots of great information.

The Commission offered comments & edits on the different sections of the Plan. Member Kukshel pointed out that the *Atkinson Then and Now* book had a good summary of the Commission’s history from its inception in 1974 through 1999 when the book was published.

Chair Wainwright showed a map of the Town he has created that identifies all town-owned parcels, and classifies them as to use, such as Town Forest lands.

8. Pollinator Pathways status report – Suzie

Alternate Newman stated that she was able to get in touch with the President of the Garden Club and she is happy to work together with the Commission to get this project off the ground. Alternate Newman mentioned a seed exchange that she is considering which would disperse milkweed seeds to residents in order to bring back plants that pollinating species are drawn to. Alternate Newman is also working on a map of Town that will highlight property lots of residents who’ve agreed to turn their gardens into pollinator-friendly gardens, and the goal will be to add new property lots to that map each year until the Town is full of pollinator-friendly gardens.

9. Foley floating dock

Chair Wainwright stated that this dock has been put back on the conservation land that separates the Foley’s property from Big Island Pond. Further discussion was tabled until next meeting.

10. Brittany Lane “landscaping” project

Chair Wainwright has reviewed a complaint to DES about a resident on Brittany Lane possibly doing landscaping work in a wetland. Further discussion was tabled until next meeting.

11. Stickney Town Forest parking at the end of Lakeside Drive

Chair Wainwright stated that someone has put up “No Parking” signs on conservation land at the end of Lakeside Drive where we allow parking for visitors to the trails in the Stickney Town Forest, and that Road Agent Ted Stewart has removed them.

12. Any Scout business? – Bill

Vice Chair Steele stated that he’s contacted a few Eagle Scout candidates and is looking for projects; he wonders if the Scouts would be able to assist with the various kiosks being installed. Vice Chair Steele also stated that he’s considering the Marshall Land Nature Walk project although he thinks it may be a bit ambitious for an Eagle Scout project because COVID has certainly limited their contacts & resources. Vice Chair Steele asked the Commission to let him know if they can think of any potential Eagle Scout projects.

13. Next meetings: August 26 and September 23, 2020 (4th Wednesdays at 7:00)

14. Save the date: NH ACC Annual Conference: Saturday, November 7, 2020

15. Adjournment

Chair Wainwright requested a motion to adjourn.

Vice Chair Steele made a motion to adjourn the July 22nd, 2020 meeting of the Atkinson Conservation Commission. Member McVay seconded the motion. Vote: 7/0/0. (The details of this roll-call vote can be found in Attachment B.)

The meeting adjourned at 8:35PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Zachary Gilberti, Recording Clerk

Attachments:

- a. Emergency Declaration**
- b. Roll-call Vote Details**
- c. Policies and Guidelines for the use of Conservation Lands**
- d. Canoe/Kayak Launch Guidelines-For-Use Document**

Attachment A

A Checklist To Ensure Meetings Are Compliant With The Right-to-Know Law During The State Of Emergency

As Chair of the [Atkinson Conservation Commission](#), I find that, due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to this meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor's Emergency Order. However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, I am confirming that we are:

a) Providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access possibilities by video or other electronic means:

We are utilizing [Zoom](#) for this electronic meeting. All members of the [Commission](#) have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through this platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in this meeting through dialing the following phone # [+1 929 205 6099](#) with meeting ID [980 9161 0777](#) and **phone** password [679769](#), or by clicking on the following website address:

<https://zoom.us/j/91797755929?pwd=MINkbnhhdko4aUxQdHEvRFdHOu1pdz09>

b) Providing public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting:

We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the meeting, including how to access the meeting using Zoom or telephonically. Instructions have also been provided on the website of the [Town of Atkinson](#) at:

www.atkinson-nh.gov

c) Providing a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are problems with access:

If anybody has a problem, please call [362-4549](#) or email at: stationmgr@atkinson-nh.gov.

d) Adjourning the meeting if the public is unable to access the meeting:

In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, the meeting will be adjourned and rescheduled.

Please note that **all votes** that are taken during this meeting shall be done by **roll call vote**.

Let's start the meeting by taking a roll call attendance. When each member states their presence, please also state whether there is anyone in the room with you during this meeting, which is required under the Right-to-Know law.

Policies and Guidelines for the Use of Conservation Land

Atkinson Conservation Commission

Adopted July 22, 2020

INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to NH RSA 36-A:4, the Atkinson Conservation Commission is empowered to manage and control the town's conservation lands. In that capacity, these policies and guidelines are set forth to preserve the town's open spaces and natural resources, while at the same time making them accessible and enjoyable to the public. Any exceptions to these Policies and Guidelines must be explicitly approved ahead of time by the Atkinson Conservation Commission.

- 1. Public Use:** As is the custom with conservation areas in other municipalities, all of Atkinson's conservation lands shall be open and available equally to all, free of charge, without limitation to where people live or any other distinguishing characteristic such as race, gender, or ethnicity.
- 2. Respect the Neighbors:** Many of our conservation areas are surrounded by residential properties, and some areas have very narrow roads leading to them. Please be respectful of the neighbors. For example, don't turn around in their driveways or back onto their lawns or gardens. These things are obvious, but unfortunately they need to be said from time to time. Visiting our conservation lands is a privilege, not a right.
- 3. Parking:** The Commission has made an effort to provide some parking for the publicly-accessible conservation lands in town. However, parking is on a first-come, first-served basis, and we cannot guarantee parking will be available during periods of high demand. Users of our conservation lands are required to follow posted signs and park only where indicated. If parking is not available, we ask visitors to return at another time. Parking on conservation land is only for the use and enjoyment of that land, and overnight parking is prohibited.
- 4. Carry-in, Carry-out:** All of the town's conservation lands are "carry-in, carry-out" locations. No trash cans are provided, and all trash must be taken with you when you leave.
- 5. Dogs:** Dogs are welcomed on the town's conservation lands and do not need to be leashed as long as they are well-behaved and under voice control of the owner. We do not enforce the town's "clean-up" regulations, just don't let your dog poop on the trail. Signs are provided at dog eye level reminding them of this. If you do clean up after your dog, you must take "it" with you (see #4 above).
- 6. Motorized Vehicles:** Motorized vehicles of any sort are strictly prohibited on the town's conservation lands. These include but are not limited to All-Terrain Vehicles, Dirt Bikes, and Snow Mobiles. Exceptions to this policy include law enforcement and other first responders, electric motorized devices for disabled

people such as wheelchairs, and Commission-approved trail maintenance activities. Horseback riding is permitted.

7. **Trails:** The conservation trails are maintained by town volunteers, and visitors are invited to assist by clearing branches or picking up trash. Maps are available on the town's web site and (while supplies lasts) in mailboxes at trail entrances. Interactive trail maps are available for your smartphone via a QR code posted at each entrance. If you choose to use a paper map, you are invited to return it to the mailbox upon completion of your walk. You are permitted to walk off-trail in the woods, but please do so "gently" so as not to harm native plants. Some of our trails are on easements across other people's land, and these are marked with red signs "Respect land owner, stay on the trail." In those cases, do what the sign says.
8. **Don't Take or Harm Anything:** Except for berry picking, mushroom gathering, and invasive plants (see the next item), visitors are asked to "do no harm" and "take no souvenirs." This includes but is not limited to picking flowers, harvesting plants, disturbing stone walls, cutting trees, making new trails, paintball, and so forth. The harming or removal of official signs or trail blazes is strictly prohibited.
9. **Invasive Plants:** The exception to the "do no harm" rule is cutting or uprooting invasive plants. If you are familiar with the state's list of invasive plants and can identify them in the field, you are more than welcome to uproot or cut them. Just don't take them with you since it's illegal to transport invasive plant materials. The most common invasive plant in our forests is Oriental Bittersweet, which is pretty easy to spot.
10. **Camping and Fires:** Overnight camping or fires of any sort are not allowed on the town's conservation lands unless a camping permit is first obtained from the Conservation Commission, and/or a fire permit is obtained from the Fire Chief. Such permits are made available on an extremely limited basis, and are given only to non-profit community organizations such as the Boy or Girl Scouts. Fireworks are prohibited on all town conservation land.
11. **Construction:** Building anything on conservation land is prohibited unless prior consent is obtained from the Commission. Consent will only be given for permanent improvements for the public good, such as a bridge across a stream. Prohibited activities include but are not limited to shelters, dams, platforms, and signs.
12. **Commercial Activities:** No commercial activities are allowed on conservation land. Examples include professional dog walking and professional photo shoots.
13. **Hunting:** Limited in-season hunting is allowed on the town's conservation lands, and specific Commission-approved regulations for hunting are available from the Selectmen's office.
14. **Dumping:** The dumping of brush or leaves (or anything else for that matter) on conservation land is prohibited.
15. **Drones:** The use of drones on conservation land is permitted as long as all applicable state and federal laws are followed, and as long as such use is for personal enjoyment and not for commercial purposes.

Atkinson Canoe/Kayak Launch

Guidelines for Use



- **Canoes and Kayaks only – no gas powered engines of any kind**
- **No Littering - Carry In/Carry Out**
- **No cleaning or culling of fish. Catch and release or take them home.**
- **Be Respectful of the Neighbors/Residents**
- **Parking for canoe/kayak access only**
- **Parking prohibited from Dusk to Dawn, violators risk citation or towing at owners expense**
- **Park in designated spots**
- **If full, please come back another time**
- **No double parking**

