

Town of Bedford
Conservation Commission Minutes
July 27, 2021

A meeting of the Bedford Conservation Commission was held on Tuesday, July 27, at the BCTV meeting room at 10 Meetinghouse Road, Bedford.

7:00 PM Call to Order

Present: William Carter (Vice Chairman, Town Council, serving as Chair for the meeting) welcomed and introduced members present: Julie Donovan (member), Dave Chiappetta (member), Stephanie Jones (member), Kathleen Ports (Associate Planner), Becky Hebert (Planning Director).

Absent: Maggie Wachs (Chair), Patricia Grogan (member), Beth Evarts (alternate member), Denise Ricciardi (Town Council alternate member)

Chair Carter stated Bob MacPherson has gone on to the Zoning Board of Adjustment and thanked him for his multiple years of service with the Conservation Commission. Wishing him the best over at the Zoning Board of Adjustment. Ms. Donovan is our newest member of the board.

Chair requests Ms. Ports review the agenda items:

Approval of the April 13, 2021, Minutes.

Approval of the June 22 minutes will be tabled until next month since most members present for that meeting are not present this evening.

Dredge and Fill Applications Reviewed

No new business

Review old business

Other business: Presentation from Craig Francisco on the Pulpit Rock Boundary Survey

Overview of Upcoming Trainings

Discussion of October Workshop

Brief nonpublic session

Chair Carter read the Mission Statement:

The mission of the Bedford, New Hampshire Conservation Commission is to protect, preserve and conserve the town's natural resources and open space land for common good. This includes stewardship and management of conservation land, protecting wetlands and vernal pools, and the planning and acquisition of land for conservation purposes. The Commission works with landowners to administer State and town wetlands regulations, and advises other boards, such as the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment on environmental impacts and alternate considerations regarding development

projects. The Conservation Commission promotes conservation activities and communicates with the citizens of Bedford on important environmental issues.

Our motto is: Keep Bedford Beautiful

Approval of Minutes. Ms. Donovan would like to abstain from voting on the minutes since she was not present at the meeting. Chair Carter tabled approval of minutes until August.

Dredge and Fill Applications Reviewed

Chair Carter said, the Commission has received two Dredge and Fill permits from NH DOT and the Planning Department has prepared a summary of these applications. Does anyone have any questions for the Planning Department regarding these applications? Would you like to update us? Ms. Ports answered, we received an application from the state for what they're calling The Bedford Tolls. It's a widening of the Everett Turnpike from Exit 12 North to the 101 intersection and includes some widening on the intersection. There's a variety of wetlands along the corridor and I believe they're paying mitigation fees through the ARM (Aquatic Resource Mitigation) fund. There are no bridges or culvert replacements. It's mostly a pretty straight-forward widening project. Chair Carter asked, this is those wetlands that are running along Route 3? Ms. Ports confirmed and continued... The other project is replacement of two culverts on Route 101 at Pulpit Brook, which is near the Twin Brook Road with a bridge. They're also adding a turn lane on the highway there, so the project is perhaps a little bit wider than it is now because of the safety issues at that location. There will be some additional hydraulic capacity, including some wildlife passage on either side of the channel. They're doing some stream alignment and then by daylighting the channel there's some onsite mitigation. The rest of the impacts will be mitigated through the Aquatic Resource Mitigation Program.

Chair Carter asked if there were any questions for staff concerning these two Dredge and Fill Permits.

There were no questions.

Chair Carter commented after reviewing, everything was all in order, ready to go. He asked, do we know when they plan to start either of these two projects? Ms. Ports said yes – The Bedford Tolls Project is scheduled to start this fall and I believe it is a two-year construction window. It is on my staff report, which should be there. The other project is 2022 as well. It will take a couple years.

Chair Carter asks if there is motion, if there are no objections by the commission to move these applications along?

No objections.

MOTION: Ms. Jones motions to recommend approval for both NH Department of Transportation applications--one for the Everett Turnpike widening and the Pulpit Brook Bridge project. Mr. Chiappetta seconds the motion. ALL IN FAVOR – unanimous.

New Business

Chair Carter states there is no new business this evening.

Review Old Business

Chair Carter said we have two updates. Beth is not here so we will not have a Bedford High School program update. As for the Chubbuck Road property, we will start to work on that earnestly. I have been waiting for Becky to have a full staff. When we started looking at this, Becky was a team of one and so we (at least in my eyes) decided that we'll wait. Now that we have Kathleen on, and I believe you have your assistant Jillian on. I saw her during the ZBA. I'm just letting them get their feet wet before I start looking at what that Chubbuck Road property is, and I'll be working with the Planning staff and Jeff Foote too. Just to get a better knowledge of what is going on up there so that I can give a full report as we move along. Hopefully, during our workshop in October, we can start working on that. It would be a great time to walk out that property in the Fall. It is a really nice property. That's my update on that.

The other thing I want to bring up (I know it's old business but it's new business) that the Cleanup Bedford Day, which is the Cub program. We did do it in April. It was a great success. We will be doing it this Fall on October 16th. It's right after Columbus Day and before all the leaves start falling out of the trees. It would be a great time. The Cub program has been great. I know I was out Sunday after the rain and did a little bit of work on New Boston, but I'm really impressed with the streets – how clean they are. Thanks to everyone who was out there on a regular basis making sure that they are grabbing those blue bags and picking up roadside trash to keep Bedford clean. I thank everyone for that. Next, we'll lead into the new item we have on Other Business. I'd like to introduce Craig Francisco and ask him for an update on the Pulpit Rock Boundary Survey. Good evening sir.

Other business: Presentation from Craig Francisco of Bedford Design Consultants, on the Pulpit Rock Boundary Survey

Craig Francisco Presentation: Mr. Francisco said, as you are probably aware we started the Pulpit Rock Boundary Survey a long time ago – November, I think, maybe December? We got all the background and deed research done. The only thing left is, how do I say this? I've had the people helping me get all the work they can get done, done. Now I have to sit down and get the t's crossed and the i's dotted. Little things like that I've got to clean up that are encumbrances basically on the title that I've got to show. The boundary calculations are done. They are complete. I'm not going to even look at them again. I'm not going to change anything I don't believe. The one thing we do need to talk about is setting the missing monuments. To be honest, I don't remember where they are. It's been a month. I found my email where it said there was twenty-one of them, approximately. I found my email where Kathleen says all but one, and I don't remember which one that was, either.

Ms. Hebert asked, so were there twenty-one corners that would be considered important corners to place monuments?

Mr. Francisco answered, I think these are important because you're letting these people know that's the end of their property. It's not really the Conservation Commission or the town's corner, but it will signify to the owner here, that, hey... don't go any further.

Ms. Hebert commented, the Land Trust is very interested in having those boundaries marked.

Mr. Francisco added, I would think those would be important to the Land Trust.

Chair Carter asked, we've already voted on making sure these get done, right? So, these would have to be done. It's part of our scope of getting this completed. Are we toward the end of our journey here when it comes to this project?

Mr. Francisco answered, I hope that next month I have a plan that's done. I'll take the word DRAFT off, have notes done, plan references, little things like that I've got to put on. Next week, next month I'm sure I will have a plan. I've got to annotate and put a note about the drainage easements, the access easement, the sub easements.

Chair Carter asked, do we need the conservancy here, is this for them to approve or is this for us to approve?

Ms. Hebert answered, this is for the Town and the Commission to approve, but we met with PLC to review the survey and the missing monumentation and to just get their take on which monuments would be critical for their monitoring work. They felt like they wanted at least all the monuments set for the lots along Esther Drive and some of those residential subdivisions.

Chair Carter said, I'm sure you will be working with Becky and her staff to firm this all up and make sure the ones that PLC is making sure to have that done so that we follow what they need because they're the ones that will be monitoring this and keeping us up to date about what's going on with this.

Mr. Francisco asked, do you just want me to come in sometime and you and I can sit down and finalize the work plan to wrap this up?

Ms. Hebert said that sounds good. We can just mark up a plan, yes.

Chair Carter asked, does anyone have any questions for Craig? I will tell you looking at these is like reading Chinese for me. I'm looking at it on a computer screen, not on a piece of paper. Will we have hard copies next month on this? They are a little bit larger than 8 and a half by 11, aren't they?

Ms. Hebert answered, yes.

Mr. Francisco clarified, they're 22 by 34

Chair Carter said, I was going say, they're quite large.

Mr. Francisco said I do have reduced copies...only one, sorry.

Chair Carter said, no, that's fine. As you said, DRAFT is on this and when it comes time to fully go over these, I'm hoping we will have a full contingent here on the Commission and we can move forward and have this fully completed. Any questions? Stephanie? Dave? Julie?

Ms. Hebert asked, Bill, could you have the Commission make a motion to have Bedford Design work with staff to complete the boundary monumentation work?

Chair Carter said, sounds good.

Ms. Hebert added, it involves amending our contract with Bedford Design and we won't know the exact dollar amount until we sit down and determine which bounds to set. I think the pins were about \$150 each to set.

Mr. Francisco said, it all depends on how far we have to walk to set them, too.

Chair Carter said, I don't remember the original price to do this or what the...

Ms. Hebert added, I think at this point, maybe not to exceed \$4,000 or something like that.

Chair Carter said, so we're looking at twenty-one monuments at possibly \$150.

Ms. Jones asked, the staff update mentions the granite versus rebar. We will be going forward with the rebar? The cheaper option, right?

Both Ms. Ports and Ms. Hebert said yes.

Ms. Hebert added, we typically use the granite markers along the roadway, along the street frontage.

Ms. Jones said, okay. But all of these are not really close to the roadway so there's no need?

Mr. Chiappetta said I remember when we were putting this together, we expected this cost. We anticipated this.

Chair Carter said, we just didn't know how many there were going to be at that point yet.

Ms. Hebert said, Correct. It's an unknown until Craig's team can go out into the field and dig up what's there.

Chair Carter said, Then I will ask for a motion, because obviously there's a dollar amount that really should come from one of us not from staff.

MOTION: Ms. Jones makes a motion to amend the contract with Bedford Design Consultants to work with Town Planning staff to finalized how many monuments and final cost not to exceed \$4,000. Mr. Chiappetta seconded the motion. ALL IN FAVOR – unanimous.

Chair Carter said, Thank you very much, Craig. We look forward to seeing you back here next month with a final copy of this for us.

Training and Data Collection Opportunities

Chair Carter said, Kathleen, would you provide us an update on training and data collection opportunities?

Ms. Ports said, there are some upcoming opportunities I wanted to mention to all of you. The New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions, of which we are a member, is having a Fiftieth Birthday/Anniversary at Bear Brook State Park September 11th from 9:30 to 1:30. It's a picnic. I don't have details yet in terms of whether there will be presentations or what other kinds of information will be available. I wanted to make you aware. There's also an upcoming Bio Blitz and basically a bio blitz is sort-of like a scavenger hunt. As you were talking tonight about the Chubbuck Road parcel, it occurred to me that might be a good opportunity to collect some data out there. It's basically a state-sponsored program where local community members download an application on their phone called iNaturalist, and they go out and take pictures and record observations of wildlife and plants on town-owned lands. That might be something we want to publicize and support. There's a training webinar that we would need to attend or that interested parties would need to attend. We could potentially even highlight or

suggest a few particular parcels of land that maybe we have less information on than others. There is also an upcoming program. It's a training program and community project. It does require a commitment of three to five staff from the Commission and potentially a few members of the public, volunteers. There's a series of six one-hour trainings and then the final presentation of your project is in April. It starts, I believe, in October and runs through (like I said) April. That would be a specific project that we wanted state staff to support and help us. There would be other Commissions working and so there would be a lot of opportunity for collaboration and just ideas and brainstorming and, how did you do that? How did you do that? That kind of goes along with our next agenda item, which I'm thinking I'll just go right into if that's okay.

Discussion of October Workshop

Ms. Ports continued, now that you have a staff member, and I am working full time as the liaison to the Committee, it's an opportunity for us to potentially put together a work plan or identify what the Commission's priorities are. We can do them for a year, or we could have a three-year plan. Whatever you guys prefer. We've had some recent suggestions about starting a noxious weed treatment program. Also, a trail stewardship program. We have a partnership already with Piscataquog Land Conservancy and so there might be some opportunities to kind of tie in with some of their training that they do for their staff monitors. There's a lot of different things that we could do and it's, I think, really important that you guys have a discussion, or we have a discussion about what excites you the most and what you really want to tackle and do first. We have, traditionally, two trainings a year. What I think would be the most effective is to potentially either communicate individually or have all of you submit your ideas and potentially even vote on them before the October meeting. Then use the October meeting as an opportunity to sort-of map out how we're going to do these things. If we picked three or four objectives for the coming year, then what does that look like? How do we staff it? What resources do we need, and what's our timeline and that kind of thing.

Chair Carter said, definitely. We do have a relatively new Commission. Since my time on this as a member, we've changed quite a bit. I would think that that would be something, goals and things to work on. I know Patricia is interested in working on trails. I know I have my Cub program going, so that's my little project that keeps going. I would encourage all the members to send an email off to Kathleen with some ideas for that so that – the more ideas the better. Now we can start looking at which ones would be best. I know I'm always a proponent of everyone having their own little project along with everybody joining in one project. Obviously, the Cub program is probably that—the one that everybody can participate in. Just to have a project to work on. It keeps you active even though we only meet once a month. It keeps your mind into what we're doing and what our goals are here as Commission. Look at that over the next month and get some emails off to Kathleen with your ideas.

Ms. Jones said, I had actually sent some of my ideas in and she mentioned some of them, so I'm happy to continue to brainstorm more. I don't know if you want me to mention... this is one of the things we can talk about during the workshop or at a later point, some of the neighboring Conservation Commissions... maybe attending some of their meetings to see some of their ideas. I know one of our neighbors does have the Trail Stewards Program, works with the Town on noxious weeds and species and so they're kind of my jumping off point for suggesting maybe for Bedford as well. But you said it very nicely. That's all I really wanted to add to that.

Chair Carter said, That's fine. It really builds an identity of what we do here as a Commission. People can see that the Con Com is working within the community to make Bedford better... beautiful. So that's our key right there. Any things that you want to do, make sure you get them off to Kathleen and obviously the members. I know Maggie is not feeling well. I hope she feels better. Just get all that information off to Kathleen. Let's load it on her. She's the new full-timer in town. Let's throw everything on her shoulders right now. Let's give Becky just a little bit of a relaxation, sit in the back office and relax a little bit because she's been working very hard over the last few months to keep the department going. It's nice that she has a full staff behind her now to allow her to do that. Any further questions from the Commission?

Ms. Jones said, I did have one. So, the Taking Action for Wildlife, that was where ideally, they wanted volunteers. I looked at that because I was very interested. It is really difficult – those training timeframes. I am a full-time teacher so as soon as the school year starts, I'm very limited. As much as I would love to commit myself... six one-hour training sessions isn't too bad. I know for myself; I might be able to make one out of six. Hopefully some of the other members can look at it and see if their schedules allow for it. I was a little sad about that. I think the Bio Blitz is probably much more doable for me personally. I just wanted to mention there is a schedule out there if you're interested to look for those six-hour training sessions. I would look now just to see if we can even have those volunteers available. I won't be able to participate, unfortunately.

Ms. Ports said, I previously sent an email with links to those websites about those programs so that's certainly a concern is the commitment of time and if we haven't identified priorities, is it timely for us right now? Maybe there's some other programs we can participate in like the Bio Blitz, for example.

Chair Carter said, I know I participated in that webinar, The Green Grass, Clean Water that was put on by Bedford, Londonderry and Litchfield. I found out I had some very good drought-resistant weeds in my yard. Now that we've had so much rain, I've learned to cut my grass higher, which is taking care of some of those weeds, but with all the water the grass is growing a lot quicker. So, I turned it back down to my normal, so I didn't have to do it as much. It was a great webinar put on and I believe there's a re-air of it going on BCTV. It really showed a lot because we do have a lot of little streams and people don't realize they're there until the rains that we do have now. Hopefully we'll be less intrusive of poisoning all that water that runs down into the Merrimack. It was a great thing just to sit there and go through that whole thing and learn what you should do on fertilizing and stuff like that. It was a good... an hour or an hour and a half. I don't know how long it was, but it was good.

Ms. Jones asked, did they mention drought-tolerant grass species at all? I'm just curious.

Chair Carter said, well, actually, it was more of a clover. They were saying that the one thing you really want to put down, thing is, grass seed is a certain size. Clover is a tenth of that size, so it's how much clover you put into there. You really don't want to put a lot of clover. There was a lot of good information. I think my yard already has natural clover. That's why it's green. It was good. I believe it's on BCTV. If you go onto the site there, they will be re-airing that. You can watch that. It was pretty good. Anything further?

With that, I'm bidding for the shortest meeting in a long time. I will ask for a motion. I will read it, since it's in front of me here.

MOTION: Chair Carter motions to go into non-public session per RSA 91-A:3 II, d for the consideration of the acquisition, sale or lease of real or personal property which, if discussed in public, would likely benefit a party or parties whose interests are averse to those of the general community. Ms. Jones seconds the motion.

Roll Call Vote:

Ms. Jones: Yes

Ms. Donovan: Yes

Mr. Chiappetta: Yes

Chair Carter: Yes

ALL IN FAVOR – unanimous.

Non-Public Session begins.

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 7:47 P.M.

The next meeting of the Bedford Conservation Commission will be August 24, 2021.

Respectfully submitted by Sue Forcier