

TOWN OF BEDFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES
September 22, 2020

A meeting of the Bedford Conservation Commission was held on Tuesday, September 22, 2020 via the Zoom meeting platform.

Present: Bill Carter (Vice Chair & Town Council), Bob MacPherson, Stephen Clough (Alternate), Stephanie Jones (Alternate), Patricia Grogan, Karin Elmer (Planner I), Rebecca Hebert (Planning Director).

Absent: Maggie Wachs, (Chair), Beth Evarts (alternate), Denise Ricciardi (Town Council Alternate), Greg Schain (alternate).

7:00 PM Call to Order

Vice Chairman Carter called the Bedford Conservation Commission meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Mr. Carter: Well, good evening everyone. I'd like to welcome everyone to the September 22nd meeting of the Bedford Conservation Commission. My name is William Carter. I'm the Town Council Rep and Vice Chair and will be acting as Chair this evening. I'd like to do a roll call of members that are here. Members of the Commission and staff introduced themselves via roll call and all indicated they were alone in the room during this online meeting.

Ms. Elmer read a statement:

- *Due to the Coronavirus crisis and in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, the Conservation Commission is authorized to meet electronically.*
- *This meeting is being conducted using the Zoom platform. All members of the Board have the ability to communicate with each other during the meeting, and the public has access to listen and participate by dialing 929-205-6099 and entering the Meeting ID # 935-9359 5868 and the meeting Password 090351. Instructions regarding remote access to the meeting have been published in advance and are available on the Conservation Commission agenda, which is posted on the Town website.*
- *There is no physical location for the meeting, which is permissible pursuant to the Governor's Emergency Order. Town of Bedford is providing public access to the Zoom meeting by telephone, and the meeting will also be broadcast live on BCTV's Channel 22.*
- *Members of the public may email staff at planning@bedfordnh.org to ask questions during the meeting or notify us of technical issues. If you have joined the meeting*

using Zoom, you may also ask questions when the Chair opens the hearing for public comment through your phone connection.

- *All votes will be taken as a roll call vote.*

- *If there are technological issues during the meeting, the Chair will recess the meeting and we will try to correct the problem. If the issue continues, the application will be postponed, and the meeting will be adjourned.*

Ms. Elmer read the agenda for the evening's meeting.

Ms. Elmer: We have the approval of minutes for August 25th of 2020. There are no new dredge-and-fill applications for this evening. The new business Ron Klemarczyk of FORECO will be doing a presentation of the Pulpit Rock Forest Stewardship plan. Under other business, there'll be an update on the Pulpit Rock Conservation Area Trail improvements. There will also be an update on previously reviewed permits and ZBA actions. If time allows, we will be going into non-public session.

Mr. Carter read the Conservation Commission Mission Statement.

Mr. Carter: Thank you Karin. I'd like to now read the mission statement of the Conservation Commission. The mission of the Bedford New Hampshire's Conservation Commission is to protect, preserve and conserve the town's natural resources and open space land for the common good. This includes stewardship and management of the 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 sound town wetland regulations and advises other town boards such as Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment of environmental impacts and alternative 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. Tonight, I'd like to appoint Stephanie Jones as a voting member, if we have any votes tonight.

Approval of Minutes:

- August 25, 2020 Conservation Commission Minutes

MOTION by Mr. MacPherson to approve the August 25, 2020 minutes as written. Seconded by Ms. Jones. Roll call vote:

Mr. MacPherson: Aye.

Mr. Clough: Aye.

Ms. Grogan: Aye.

Ms. Jones: Yes.

Mr. Carter: William Carter says, yes

The Minutes of August 25, 2020 have been approved.

Mr. Carter: The Commission has not received any new dredge-and-fill permits for this tonight's meeting. The next item on our agenda will be a presentation by Ron Klemarczyk, FORECO. On the draft Pulpit Rock Conservation Areas Forest Stewardship Plan, Mr. Klemarczyk, could you please introduce yourself and know we're ready for your presentation.

PULPIT ROCK CONSERVATION AREA FOREST STEWARDSHIP PLAN:

Mr. Klemarczyk: Okay, great. This is still new technology to me. Anyways, my name is Ron Klemarczyk, I am alone in my semi-office here. We had a meeting with the commission several months ago to discuss my findings of the forest inventory at Pulpit Rock. I sought input and got questions in. Then, I put together the Forest Management Plan, which I'm assuming everyone was forwarded a copy, am I correct in that, Karen?

Mr. Carter: Yes.

Mr. Klemarczyk: There really shouldn't be any surprises in the management plan itself, because it's stuff that we discussed at the prior meeting. I think the emphasis of the plan looked at the two biggest concerns I had. One is the forest itself with the heavy component of hemlock. It is susceptible to the hemlock woolly adelgid. If we keep getting warm winters, eventually the Adelgid population will come back and will probably start causing some mortality. We haven't seen much of it throughout the state because we've just had just enough cold snaps during our warm winters to knock the population down.

The fact that most of the Pulpit Rock is down in the valley which is a cold air sink, helps quite a bit that maybe the hemlock higher up, will get hit a lot quicker before the trees down along the brook, which is the biggest concern. Now, hemlock isn't a big valuable timber species. It is important for wildlife habitat. Although with a number of trails down along the brook, that area was not heavily used by deer that I saw on my inventory. I tended to see the deer in the more remote areas, which is to be expected. If you read the plan, you'd see that I was kind of setting things up that if we did have to do a salvage regarding access and markets and stuff like that.

Unfortunately, there isn't much of a chip market right now and it's not anticipated to return at least under the current governor. Even then, some of these plants are being mothballed that they may not be willing to fire up in case the political climate changes yet again. That would cause a big issue if we had a lot of mortality in the forest and a lot of the trees are small. There is a hemlock pulp market, but it's in New York, which is quite a distance from Bedford, but it could be worked out. That was one concern.

The forest, allow it to grow into old growth and much of it had been thinned sometime in the past, but because of the shallow ledge soils and a lot of spots it is stagnating but it will continue to be a forest unless there's some major disaster, whether it's the Adelgid or the hurricane of 38 moved down a lot of trees in that area there. Hopefully that won't happen and hopefully the cold weather will keep things at bay, but that's just something to keep in mind. The other concern I had was what I anticipate increased public use especially when all of the Pulpit road subdivision is completed, there's a lot of empty house lots there. Once those are full, I'm sure the trails are going to be getting a lot more use from the local population. As the area continues to get developed, it will become a popular spot. With that in mind, it's critical to have the trails, maintain the bridges and boardwalks, maintained in safe conditions. The key thing is just try to get the trails out of the wet areas so that they're high and dry, so that they can be used year-round.

That was a lesson we learned, especially this spring is that the trails used to be used in the summer and lot in the fall, but now they're getting used pretty much 24/7/365. We've had quite a bit of emphasis of moving the trails onto dry ground, getting them away from any wet areas or building, plank walks or bridges or something like that, just that these trails because they're getting used year round they can become-- crossing and Brook can be quite hazardous in freezing conditions where the rocks are to get very icy or if you get snow and in some of the areas get skim coat of ice on them and things get very slippery. I'm hoping that that was kind of came through and my management plan and that typically our management plan involves doing some type of forest management, timber harvesting, that sort of stuff. This was a little different as I said when we did the earlier presentation that I'd be looking more at the recreation and the forest health of the Pulpit conservation area.

The last thing is the boundary lines behind those house lots on whether it's Rachel's way or the new reserve at West Bedford, they are along Pulpit road. You really need to get those boundaries behind those houses blazed and painted as early as possible so we don't end up with the nightmare that we had in Greenfield farms. You get them before the houses are built, that's going to help protect things.

If there is an issue, it makes it a lot easier to do in the enforcement seeing that, hey, not only was the line blazed and painted, there were some signs and they blatantly went through that, gives you a better standing in court if it comes to that. I guess at this point does anyone have any questions or comments about the plan or something that they don't quite understand or something you'd want to expand it on?

Mr. Carter: Yes. I'll go. I will open it up to the board members for any questions, Mr. MacPherson.

Mr. Macpherson: Yes. Ron, if we did have a warm winter, is there any way to mitigate or fight off this hemlock wooly adelgid or is there anything you can do, anything that can be done to can prevent any further damage?

Mr. Klemarczyk: Well, the most critical thing to do is support political candidates who think climate change is a problem. The second thing is there are insecticides, but it's not economical for a large-scale operation. You could treat trees right around the say the pulpit, but it would have to be done every year and it can get quite expensive. There is no large-scale insecticide applications but certain critical trees are in very, very small areas could, be treated. There is a soil-- an insecticide you put in the soil but that wouldn't work in the area around the Pulpit where it's ledge and in cliffs and stuff like that. I don't think they recommend it near water. I'm not sure that but it's just basically you just got to hope for the best.

Mr. Macpherson: My second question relates to the boundary lines. I couldn't agree with you more about getting onto this. Do we have a timeline? Do we know when we could get this done?

Mr. Klemarczyk: Well, the best time to do it is in either in the fall when the leaves are off or the springtime before the leaves come out. The corners have all been set at least when I went looking for them. Within the next few months, it would be easy to do that, the longer you wait, the harder it is to find the corners. Get the corners, identify them, with the leaves off, it's very easy to run the boundary lines you can almost see from corner to corner once the leaves are off.

Mr. Macpherson: Is FORECO available to do that this fall?

Ms. Elmer: Just to interject, before-- Becky and I are working with the Piscataquog Land Conservancy on an overall list of all the surveying needs to get done. It may or may not be something that we ask Ron to do for us. We're making a comprehensive list right now to see exactly what needs to be done and then we'll be moving forward from there.

Mr. Klemarczyk: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Carter: Any other board member?

Mr. Clough: Yes. I'm just curious about the pressure from people walking the trail to the COVID. When I walk that trail, it seems pretty busy and I'm wondering, Do we just leave it as is and-- What's your assessment of how better to conserve the trails? Does there need to be more in terms of, say, Boy Scouts going up there and building miniature bridges or walks or anything like that?

Mr. Klemarczyk: Well, there were a few bridges that I saw that they had long stringers and which will work fine on a short term. They're not pressure treated, and they do start to rot. There were a few bridges that probably should be replaced. I wouldn't recommend building any more trails because that means more maintenance and more impact on habitat and then like that floating bridge right off the trail head off of the new Boston road, that should be looked at.

It's a very difficult thing to walk on in the wintertime, for our older people. I would recommend trying to-- you can go around that swamp. There are a few other wet areas

as say, on the tough's trail that there's a wet area bypass trail that maybe you would want to recommend. Taking out the Tuft's trail where it frequently floods and just move the whole thing to the bypass, so people aren't using two trails there.

In the wintertime, it freezes up and snows. The Tufts trail looks pretty good and nice straight trail, but in the spring or a wet fall, it becomes impassable in some spots. The focus that I did on the trails was at the southern end. The only time I looked at the trails was when I was out doing the inventory and maybe we can get together and do a walkthrough on some of the trails to look at some of the potential issues that are out there.

Mr. Carter: Okay. That sounds good, thank you. Well, my question is more on the enhancement of what you just said about our trails. That's in the plans to do that, will that enhance and make the trails better for the people walking in? It sounds like some of the suggestions you've made will allow that to happen. Secondly, when it comes to timber harvest, I know you mentioned that that wasn't the main focus, but do you see opportunities for a timber harvest if needed when it comes to the area?

Mr. Klemarczyk: Again, the philosophy that was expressed at the previous meetings was that it was more going to be a natural area. The timber harvest issue, the biggest issue regarding a timber harvest if we were to do a salvage is going to try to figure out how to get a decent access in there for modern logging equipment.

I did spend some time in the management plan coming up with various access roads but because of the way the trails are, any type of a harvest is going to impact some of the trails. The area on the southwest side of Pulpit Brook up on the hillside there towards the field, that would be very difficult to access because it would require crossing the brook, and as you know, the brook is kind of a gorge and it's got wetlands in it and stuff like that. I think in the past, a lot of that went out through the property into New Boston or Amherst. Looking at a potential access route from that area, I recommended that in some case, it was a disaster, and you have to work in a hurry to salvage the trees before they go bad.

It'd be nice to have some type of an access route planned ahead of time, out in towards New Boston and out to the road. I forget the name of the road that's out there in New Boston, but the way that the guy gets in the hay, the fields and stuff like that.

It would be nice to get a permanent access, but it doesn't have to become a trail or anything like that, and the only potential route to get the trees out, because if you go out that way, it would really minimize the impact of pulpwood broken in a lot of the trails if for some reason that hillside needed could be salvaged.

Mr. Carter: Thank you.

Ms. Hebert: The conservation easement also limits the extent of logging that can happen on the property, and it really is limited to maintaining forest health. A salvage cut to remove tree species, or to improve the overall forest health would be something

that would be permitted, but it's not an activity that could be done routinely for the purposes of generating income.

Mr. Carter: Thank you. Any further questions from the commission? All right, not seeing any, I will now open the meeting up to the public and invited members of the public to speak. Have we had anybody come on board, Karin, or Becky?

Ms. Elmer: I don't see anyone logged on to the meeting, Becky. Have you gotten anything?

Ms. Hebert: I have not received any emails. No one from the public has joined the meeting.

Mr. Carter: Okay. We haven't seen any emails submitted according to this?

Ms. Hebert: No.

Mr. Carter: Okay. Just following the script here. Ron, I'd ask you to address any remaining comments. Do you have any closing comments before we move on?

Mr. Klemarczyk: Not really. You've got a really neat conservation area there in between the cellar holes in the gorge and in the large trees. I think the town of Bedford is lucky to have that area and just want to make sure it doesn't get overused too much of a good thing here. That's my big concern about the trails. It's just the overuse can really hurt a forest. The other thing and-- I don't think you really need any more trails. I think you've got plenty to maintain, and they do access the key areas.

The last thing is-- Again, in the plan somehow, maybe making some type of an emergency access route that's suitable for the fire department's Gator UTV or small vehicle that could get into, say, the Pulpit Rock area in case there is an emergency. We've had several on the concrete trail systems that we've now modified some of our ski trails to allow UTV or the gator type vehicle for emergency access and work closely with the fire department as far as the layout gates and stuff like that.

That would be the only other thing, and I think I've outlined those in the plan. I guess, as use increases, you're going to have more chances for problems out there.

Mr. Carter: Thank you. I know you're familiar with doing those kind of things we worked with when I was down in the Salem area at a conservation commission, by putting a fire road in to make sure that there was access just in case, but we'll take a look at that. All right. Ron, I like to thank you-

Mr. Klemarczyk: We just finished that fire road last week, by the way.

Mr. Carter: Very good. I and the commission would like to thank you for all the work that you have done on this and thank you for your presentation this evening.

Mr. Klemarczyk: Okay. You're welcome. Did you want me to stick around for the trail update? I think the next item on the agenda?

Ms. Elmer: You can if you want.

Mr. Carter: Yes.

Mr. Klemarczyk: I haven't been down there since I finished that project, so I'm getting curious as to what it looks like or how it's going.

Mr. Carter: Obviously, this new technology gives you a little bit more time to practice it. Okay. Next item will be old business. Karin, can you give us an update, please?

TRAILS UPDATE:

Ms. Elmer: Sure. As Ron alluded to, all the trail work was completed last month, and the state has come down to inspect the work. They were very pleased with all the work that was done on the site so, we have passed the site inspection. New Hampshire Historical Resources also gave their blessing to the project so, that approval was also received.

Now, we are working on a laundry list of paperwork that the state wants to go along with our grant. They're looking at all the survey plans. They're looking at easements. They're looking at- I don't know, it must be 50,000 documents they're looking for. We're in the process of trying to gather all those documents together to stand up to them. All the paperwork should be done in the next couple of weeks. We'll keep you posted, but as of right now, the work is done, it's all a matter of paperwork.

Mr. Carter: Okay. Ron, while you stayed on, did you have any comments that you would like to make before we move on to our next agenda?

Mr. Klemarczk: No. I'll be heading down there later on this fall. My wife is curious to see the work that went on. One other comment, I had mentioned a report about perhaps having an archaeologist look at some of the old cellar holes and see if they are in fact the original prior owners that lived there or some are just curious if that could be something that the town might pursue or just hold off until a future date.

Ms. Elmer: I think at this point, the emphasis on getting that grant closed. Once we can put that entirely to bed, then we'll have the opportunity to look at future projects.

Mr. Klemarczyk: Okay. All right. That's it. That's all I have. Again, I'd like to thank the Town of Bedford for hiring me. It was a great project, and I hope I can be of service in the future, as they say.

Ms. Elmer: Thank you.

Mr. Klemarczyk: I will formalize the management plan as presented to you. How many hard copies do you want?

Ms. Elmer: Oh, just one and PDF.

Mr. Klemarczyk: Okay. All right.

Ms. Hebert: Thank you.

Mr. Carter: Thank you, Ron.

Mr. Klemarczyk: Thank you. Have a good evening.

Mr. MacPherson: Thank you.

Ms. Elmer: You too.

Mr. Carter: Thank you. You too. All right. I'll ask staff for any updates or previously reviewed permits and ZBA actions.

UPDATE ON ZBA ACTIONS AND PERMITS:

Ms. Elmer: The only update I have is Mr. Hamel went back to the Zoning Board of Adjustment for his pool within the wetlands setback, and the Zoning Board of Adjustment did approve that pool based on the Conservation Commission's comments and requests for rain gardens and extra protection of those wetlands.

Mr. Carter: Excellent. I did watch that, and it went very well, so very good. All right. That was the update.

Now, I'm going to ask for a motion:

MOTION by Mr. Carter to enter a non-public session per RSA 91-A:3, II(d) for 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 adverse to those of the general community. Mr. MacPherson: So, moved. **Ms. Jones:** I'll second.

Mr. Carter: Seconded by Stephanie Jones. I will now do a roll call.

Mr. MacPherson: Aye.

Mr. Clough: Aye.

Ms. Grogan: Aye.

Ms. Jones: Yes.

Mr. Carter: William Carter says, yes. Now, we'll go into our non-public session at 7:29pm

Motion by Mr. MacPherson to come out of nonpublic at 7:44 pm. Second by Mr. Carter. Roll call vote: Mr. MacPherson, yes, Mr. Carter, yes, Mr. Clough, yes, Ms. Jones, yes, Ms. Grogan, yes - Motion passed

Motion by Mr. Carter to seal the minutes of the non-public session. Seconded by Mr. MacPherson.

Roll call vote: Mr. MacPherson, yes, Mr. Carter, yes, Mr. Clough, yes, Ms. Jones, yes, Ms. Grogan, yes – Motion passed

Motion by Mr. Carter to adjourn at 7:45pm. Seconded by Mr. MacPherson. Roll call vote: Mr. MacPherson, yes, Mr. Carter, yes, Mr. Clough, yes, Ms. Jones, yes, Ms. Grogan, yes –

Mr. Carter: Thank you for those who watched this session of the Bedford Conservation Commission.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Transcription: GoTranscript

Edits: Christine Szostak & Karin Elmer