

## **Fracestown Conservation Commission Minutes – Monday Dec 4, 2023**

Betsy called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Members in attendance: Betsy Hardwick, Robin Haubrich, Jim St. Jean, Elizabeth Hunter Lavallee, Don Crooker, Dennis Rodier, Jeff Briggs, Richard Eby (alternate)

Public in attendance: Robert Bitterli, representing the Recreation Commission

### Notice and Announcements:

The commission received a letter from NHDES regarding Shoreland Permit Application 2023-02896, Tax Map 15, Lot 9, indicating the permit was approved with conditions.

### Minutes:

The November minutes were approved without objection, as amended to clarify additional details of the plan reviews and Betsy's recusal from the field mowing vote.

### New Business:

Bob Bitterli joined the meeting representing the rec commission, to discuss co-sponsoring certain activities or events. The concept of a BioBlitz-inspired scavenger hunt was a promising possibility.

Elizabeth provided an update on the 2024 outreach program, which is being called "Why Special Places Matter." This program is being run in collaboration with the Fracestown Land Trust (FLT).

A full moon hike is planned for Sat. Feb 24, in partnership with FLT. The hike will depart from Tim Coffin's house.

The commission received a report of an unauthorized trail in the Crotched Mountain Forest. Two commission members were able to locate the trail and assess the situation. Three potential issues were identified: 1) Living and dead trees were cut on town property 2) The stone wall which is the parcel boundary between a private landowner's property and the town property was altered and 3) A landowner has installed "POSTED" signs on trees that appear to be located within the town forest. Betsy was able to contact the landowner who confirmed they were responsible for the trail. The state was notified of these encroachments, as they hold an executory interest in the town forest through the LCIP program. After a detailed discussion, the commission agreed that the trail needed to be closed and the stones that were moved from the wall needed to be restored. Additionally, the commission agreed to inform the land owner that some of the posted signs appear to be located on town property and should be moved, or they would be subject to removal by the town. The commission will prepare a letter back to the landowner outlining the necessary actions.

Next the commission discussed the general policy the commission should take in response to learning of future unauthorized trails. After a discussion, the commission agreed to take the following general actions in the future: If the commission can determine the responsible party, they will attempt to

contact the party involved and follow-up with a letter if required. Easement or executory interest holders will also be notified. If the responsible party cannot be determined, the commission will post trail closure signs and brush in the trail as appropriate.

Betsy provided an update on the proposal she received from the SNHRPC regarding assistance updating the Conservation Plan/Natural Resources Inventory (NRI). The commission discussed the proposal and agreed to move forward and bring the proposal to the planning board.

The commission received a request from Barry Wicklow to help purchase stream flow monitoring cameras that he can use for his stream study research program. Jim made a motion to support the funding of up to two cameras if they will be deployed within town boundaries, the money to come from the conservation fund, not to exceed \$1000. This was seconded by Dennis. The motion carried unanimously without objection.

The commission discussed a proposed new trail Jim laid out at the Fisher Hill Town Forest that will go up and over the summit area. This town forest was designated for this type of recreational use and this proposal is consistent with the current forest management plan. The trail does not impact wetlands, vernal pools, or other sensitive areas and is shown to be low impact according to data from the NH Granite overlay "Planning Trails for People and Wildlife." After a discussion, the commission approved building of the new trail, to be called the Fisher Hill Trail.

#### Old Business:

The fields at the Crotched Mountain Town Forest were successfully mowed. Robin made a motion to pay the \$675 invoice, to be paid from the conservation fund. This was seconded by Elizabeth. The motion passed unanimously without objection.

The commission had a further discussion about the kiosk at the Crotched Mountain Town Forest parking area, which is in need of repair. The repair work is not likely to happen before spring, so the commission agreed to take short term mitigation steps if needed before then.

The commission next discussed progress on the yearly property easement monitoring requirements. There is one property, the Humphrey's conservation easement, that has known missing boundary markers. The commission would like to re-establish the pin locations which must be done by a surveyor. The commission will solicit estimates for this work. Don made a motion to authorize up to \$1000 to come from the conservation fund to pay for this survey work. This was seconded by Jeff. The motion passed unanimously without objection.

Additionally, the Hill and Varnum Easements still need to be monitored. Rich agreed to do Hill and Jim will do Varnum.

Betsy asked commission members for feedback on the draft Conservation Action Plan (CAP). Members felt the plan was in good shape and should be adopted for next year.

#### Other Business:

The next meeting is scheduled for Jan 1, New Year's Day, so the meeting will be postponed until Monday, Jan 8.

Lastly, Betsy provided an update on the progress she has made so far organizing the commission files.

There being no objections, Betsy adjourned the meeting at 8:46pm.

/Respectfully submitted by Jim St. Jean, Clerk/