

**Approved: 14 January 2009**

## **Hanover Conservation Commission Minutes, December 10, 2008**

**Present:** Robin Carpenter, Ray Hogue, Michael Mayor, Douglas McIlroy (scribe), Anne Morris, Judith Reeve (chair), Sandra White, William Baschnagel (Select Board representative), Vicki Smith (staff).

### **Dartmouth College wetlands application for golf course**

Frank Roberts of FO&M described the project: replace a failed clay drain pipe and manhole in the golf course. This pipe is the outlet from Occam Pond and from some underdrains in a fairway. Its failure caused water from the pond to back up into the fairway. Repairs were undertaken in early spring 2008, but rain delays pushed the work into the season and golfers played around the flooded area. In the course of work, underdrains were also found to have failed. Inspection of the flooded area revealed it was a wetland. Roberts said the area was probably a visible wetland in the 1920s. Reeve had seen it flooded for ice skating in the 1950s.

Carpenter asked why an application for work in the spring was filed so late. He deplored the prevalence of after-the-fact applications, which bypass regulatory scrutiny. Roberts: the press of work in his office delayed the application to September, Carpenter: then why do we not see it until December? Roberts: town staff found the September application incomplete.

McIlroy wondered whether the failed underdrains would result in a return of the wetland. Would it perhaps become a water hazard, or might a further drainage application be forthcoming? Roberts said that would be a decision of the golf course, not FO&M.

McIlroy moved that the Commission not comment on the application. Carpenter seconded.

White said the application reads as if the work is yet to be done; most commissioners misunderstood the timing. Reeve said the application should be written in the past tense. Morris said that no comment could be taken as a signal that the commission doesn't care about the matter.

The motion was reworded to authorize a letter stating that the application should acknowledge that the work has already been done. It was passed unanimously.

For the commission's information, Roberts said that an application will be forthcoming for emergency repair of abutments of the golf course high bridge that have eroded dangerously. Mickey Marcus, the town's consultant on Girl Brook restoration, proposed that this short stretch be treated with riprap and stone cross vanes, not tree trunks and other natural material as he recommended downstream. An emergency wetlands permit has been obtained from the state. Marcus is monitoring the work, which should be finished within a few days. Reeve and Smith have verified that the repair is consistent with the restoration plans. Hogue urged a site visit, perhaps in spring, which could possibly result in a request for further modification.

### **Capital Improvement Program**

McIlroy described aspects of Jonathan Edwards's draft CIP that could be of concern to the commission. The biggest such item is a linear park and bike/pedestrian path along Mink Brook from the DPW storage site at Cuttings Corner to South Esker. Three bridges are proposed in unspecified locations. The corridor has been designated as a priority in the Open Space Master Plan. Morris asked that more

solid information, such as a map, be obtained.

The trails committee has noted that a Mink Brook trail should extend to reach the Penfield easement, which in turn leads to the Williamson and Etna Highlands easements. Baschnagel (and Van de Poll, see “Mink Brook Highlands” below) said it could also be extended past the beaver ponds behind Hypertherm. The sewer line would make a good bike/running path, but because it goes through back yards very near houses, the sewer easement bans public use. The committee believes a hiking trail would be more pleasant on the opposite side of the brook (but see Van de Poll's opinion below). There are deed restrictions against bicycles and permanent bridges in the Mink Brook Nature Preserve, and against bicycles in the Tanzi Tract. The committee was struck by the contrast between the estimate of \$12/foot for trails and the typical costs of trails that the committee has built, which are near \$0.

The trails committee and others have long talked about upgrading the Girl Brook East trail for walking to the schools. The CIP is an opportunity to fold this into the town's priorities. Reeve said it would be a good candidate for a Safe Routes to School grant. Baschnagel said these grants are awarded several times a year. Smith said that planning participation by the schools is essential. Carpenter believed that formal participation could be arranged.

The draft CIP also mentions the possibility of converting class 6 roads to trails; the trails committee would put Wardrobe from the log landing to Rennie Road at the top of the list for such treatment. Hogue endorsed the idea and Smith thought the principal landowner was likely to be favorable.

Reeve charged the trails committee with making more detailed recommendations to the commission at the January meeting. Morris said the Conservation Fund should be in the CIP, as prospective projects often exceed its capacity.

### **Budget**

Carpenter moved that Van de Poll's interim bill for the Mink Brook Highlands study (see below) be paid from the conservation fund. Reeve seconded. It was passed unanimously. An \$850 payment to Jim Henderson for tree work at Mink Brook west will be taken from operating funds.

Smith said the town manager has proposed a \$2000 cut in the commission budget for fiscal 2010. Baschnagel said that the main chance to alleviate this 40% decrease is to appear at the appropriate Select Board hearing.

### **Trails committee**

McIlroy reported that Fred Appleton has resigned from the trails committee for health reasons. Dartmouth has moved aside several cords of heavy logging waste that blocked Highway 34. The many hours that Tom Linell and Larry Litten have spent recently maintaining trails in Indian Ridge attest to the desirability of relinquishing our extraterritorial rights there.

### **Mink Brook Highlands**

Several visitors arrived to hear Rick Van de Poll's highly informative interim report on a 12-month study of the undeveloped area between Mink Brook and the Lebanon border. The report covered all of the area for which permission to visit had been granted—somewhat more than 2/3 of 600+ total acres. The more hospitable western part has been highly affected by farming, which continued into the 20th century. It has sweet soils and some formidable stands of invasive plants. The rougher, bouldery eastern part has been much less disturbed. Wildlife is most abundant along Mink Brook.

The presentation was organized around distinct natural communities within the study area. Some of them unusual in our vicinity: a hawthorn woods, lowland spruce/balsam forest, and a black ash hillside wetland. Van de Poll had begun to identify wildlife corridors, notably one across Great Hollow Road.

He will get better data from winter tracking.

Reeve asked whether Van de Poll had any recommendations about preservation priorities; McIlroy directed particular attention to the possibility of a trail along the south side of the brook. Because of its impact on wildlife habitat, Van de Poll opposed such a trail if it were to attract heavy use.

### **Open space committee--executive session**

Reeve moved to adjourn to executive session per RSA 91A to discuss a real-estate negotiation. Carpenter seconded. A roll-call vote carried unanimously. In the executive session, the Conservation Commission decided to make the landowner a counter offer and to return to the regular meeting. The regular meeting continued after the executive session.

### **Content of wetlands applications**

The Commission considered a draft memorandum asking staff to assure that wetlands applications for major activities include a drainage analysis pertinent to the new Section 702.7(5) of the Zoning Ordinance. The Commission cannot fully meet its responsibility to provide timely advice about applications that lack this information, which has rarely been available before hearing deadlines. The memorandum suggests that the commission get a quantitative “executive summary” that bears on the conservation interest in groundwater and long-term stream flow. It was agreed to forward the memorandum to the Planning and Zoning Department.

Meeting adjourned at 10:05 PM

Doug McIlroy, Scribe