

Hanover Conservation Minutes, November 11, 2009

Approved: December 9, 2009

Members present: Edwin Chamberlain, Ray Hogue, Douglas McIlroy (scribe), Anne Morris, Judith Reeve (chair), Sandra White
Staff present: Vicki Smith

Recognition for service. Reeve read and presented a Hanover Tip-of-the-Hat citation to retired vice-chairman Robin Carpenter. Members complimented him individually for his distinctive and principled contributions to the Commission. Reeve also read a Tip-of-the-Hat for Tom Linell's long and devoted service to the town's trails.

Bank failure at Rivercrest. Frank Roberts of Dartmouth Facilities Operations and Tim McNamara of Dartmouth Real Estate informed the Commission about a recent landslide, for the stabilization of which they are seeking emergency DES authorization. Roberts said about 100 feet of the top of the high riverbank gave way about a week after the heavy rains of October 23 and 24. He exhibited photos of a wide gash some 25 feet deep at the top with a talus slope extending into the river. He wishes to act quickly because the bare material of the slide is wide open to erosion and the steep edges of the new gully are poised to fall in.

Though final plans from consultants are not in hand, it is likely that the side slopes will be cut back, some stone placed in the main channel, and a heavy stone retaining wall installed near the foot. Fabric would be laid down for the winter in anticipation of replanting in spring. McNamara said the new grade is very unstable, resting at the limiting angle of repose. He speculated that the slide was lubricated in this very wet year by drainage into structurally weak backfill in the defunct gravel quarry. The slide appeared to be related to a man-caused wetland near the brink of the bank. The surface material exposed in the slide, however, is now very dry and prone to slipping.

Morris asked about the likelihood of further landslides. McNamara said that the hillside bears evidence of other slumps in the past. He said that development proposed for Rivercrest would be set far back from the failed bank and include no drainage to the bank, but the event will focus further attention on drainage issues.

Lee and Yen application. The site of a proposed replacement house within a wetland setback at 4 Willow Spring Lane was visited by Reeve, Morris and Hogue. The applicant was represented at the site by John Vasant, architect. The written site-visit report said the superstructure of the prior building has been demolished; silt fence has been emplaced around the work area; and the site is clear of debris. Chamberlain asked whether a wetland permit had been obtained for the demolition. Reeve said that foundations were still in place, and demolition equipment had worked from the driveway, so the activity had not disturbed the wetland buffer.

Hogue said the applicant proposed that roof drainage would be directed to drywells or raingardens. The site-visit team recommended further planting to improve the absorptive capacity of the slope down from the existing parking area to the watercourse. McIlroy suggested that the planting extend into the north corner of the existing parking area, to pull impervious area further from the watercourse and offset some of the paving for a new turnaround. Reeve said the applicant hesitated to remove part of the old parking area for fear that the work would increase disturbance beyond the requirements for an administrative wetland permit. McIlroy thought that this disturbance was of the same nature as what would be caused by the installation of planting closer to the watercourse, which did not elicit such an objection.

Reeve moved that the Commission support the application and forward the site-visit report to the ZBA

together with the above planting recommendations. The motion was seconded by Chamberlain and passed unanimously.

Stewardship. Smith said that consultant Rick van de Poll had earlier in the day toured the wildlife-rich boulder woods behind Hypertherm with John Joline and the Hanover Conservation Council.

Smith said the Gile Hill project has hired John Morton to redesign the proposed bike/ped path down the steep slope to Buck Road.

White asked about the status of a boundary survey to identify possible intrusions at Tanzi Tract. Smith said the surveying was done but boundary pins were still to be installed.

Smith said she and Michael Mayor had supervised an abutter's removal of dead limbs from a tree in the Mink Brook Natural Area as previously approved by the Commission.

Administrative matters. Reeve said that the town's Sustainability Committee is setting up a separate website of its own. In view of the difficulty of contributing to the town's website, she wondered whether the Commission might piggyback on this alternate one. She will watch its development.

Reeve said that to strengthen ties between the Conservation Commission and the Connecticut River Joint Commission she was looking for another representative to the CRJC.

Having received a report of hunters in boats on Mink Brook, Smith posted no-hunting signs along the shore of the MBNA. She may also post the opposite shore of Mink Brook..

McIlroy said the Balch Hill Management Committee ran an invasive-plant work day on Balch Hill with the help of a licensed herbicide applicator. Chamberlain said that among other things, the group improved the ambiance of a stone bench at the top of the Piane Trail by removing brush around an old apple tree.

Easement monitoring. Smith has completed 13 of 17 monitoring reports; and owners have signed off on 40% of them.

Smith said that some fine tuning of relations with landowners is in order for riparian buffers under easement. Several questionable uses have turned up in the easements at Mulherrin Farm/Pete's Brook: drainage discharge, erosion, yard waste, lawn, recreational structures, wood storage, bridge. Smith suggested marking the easement boundary. The matter was referred to the Open Space Committees.

Open space committee. Morris said that a baseline data form for easements has been revised.

A potential easement on Route 10 is on hold; some other prospects have arisen.

Trails committee. McIlroy said that time constraints derailed an Eagle-Scout proposal to work on the Cliffside Trail along the river. A suggested alternative project would connect Pasture Road and the Baum Conservation Area; Jim Baum supports the idea. McIlroy will look into issues about work on a Class VI road and joint ownership of the town parcel through which Pasture Road runs.

Three volunteers from Ledyard Bank worked on the path from Hovey Lane to Currier Place and on revegetating where invasive plants had been removed at Highway 38.

John Taylor and a party of Tuck students made trail improvements on Highway 38.

The 2009 edition of the trails map is at the printer.

Approval of minutes. Morris moved that the October minutes be approved as submitted. The motion was seconded by Chamberlain and passed with one abstention and no nays.

Adjournment. The meeting adjourned for a public presentation by naturalist Rick van de Poll about natural resources in the area between Greensboro Road/Mink Brook and the Lebanon boundary.