



PETERSHAM CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING 12 August 2014 MINUTES

MEMBERS:

- ✓ John Baker
- ✓ Robert Clark
- ✓ Ashley Gabrenas
- ✓ David Lockesmith
- Tom Webber (associate)
- ✓ Henry Woolsey
- Don West
- ✓ Ry Parcell

GUESTS:

- Mary-Anne Reynolds
- Abbie Castagnaro

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 pm in the Town Office Building. The meeting was duly published, and the Meeting Agenda was received by the Town Clerk prior to the meeting.

Minutes of the Previous Meetings

Minutes of the June and July 2014 regular meetings were approved with minor corrections. John Baker was not present at the July meeting, at which Ry Parcell took notes.

Reynolds Agricultural Road Upgrade Proposal

Mary-Anne Reynolds gave a brief overview of a proposal to upgrade a short section (~ 100 linear feet) of currently existing agricultural road for the purpose of accessing land to the west of their house with larger logging and chipping machinery. The land is currently being logged under a forest cutting plan, and the machinery needs to be moved farther west for logging purposes. There is an existing road, but the reach of the road proposed for improvement becomes difficult to use in wet conditions. The plan is to improve the short reach by filling in with rock to allow large logging and chipping machinery to safely pass. The road is within the 100-ft vegetated wetland buffer zone, with wetlands on both sides of the reach proposed for improvement. Members discussed our ruling on this road in 2013, to make sure that any ruling we made on the present request is consistent with our previous decisions.

Forest Cutting Plans

None.

Town Tree Committee

Bob Clark reported that the tree committee had been constituted and had held several meetings at irregular intervals. The major topic of discussion thus far has been the wood banking issue that several area towns have implemented. Invasive species control, and protection of scenic roadside trees were also topics discussed.

Conservation Restrictions—Baseline Reports and Monitoring

Members discussed the status of several CR's held by the Town, including the Landworks Farm, St. Mary-St. Scholastica, the Gould Woodlot, the King Property, the Slab City Tract, and the upcoming Day Property. Members thanked John Baker and his students for helping with much of this work through his Clark University "Land Conservation" class. John reported that this year's class of 15 students will perform the monitoring on four town CR's. Work on these CR's, which constitutes the "hands-on" portion of his conservation class, will take place during the last three weeks in September and first two weeks of October. The class hopes to present the monitoring reports at the regular December meeting of the Commission. Two students who took the course last year, Ms. Nicole Sayles and Mr. Peter Christianson, have been working with Bob Clark on developing the missing baseline report for the Slab City tract. This work is nearly finished. Finally, the class assisted Bob Clark in making a survey of the Day Property, with narrative and photos. This document will be finished in just a few weeks.

Land Grant and Quabbin-to-Cardigan Grant

Bob Clark noted that the final reimbursement for the Land Grant from the State for expenses for these grants should be arriving within the next month or so. For the Quabbin-to-Cardigan grant the town has now received a check for \$4,032 for incidental expenses for the King Property Conservation Restriction.

Quabbin Heritage Landscape Project Grant Submission

These are grant requests to co-hold CR's on parcels of land in the Towns of Petersham, Athol and Phillipston. The Conservation Commission in each Town will co-hold the CR on the Feldman Property with the Mt. Grace Land Conservation Trust. The second CR will be on 50 acres of property owned by the Hutchinson family and will be held by the Petersham Conservation Commission.

DCR Applicability Decisions under the Watershed Protection Regulations

Bob Clark reported on the status of the Glen Valley Road bridge work. The DCR has issued a ruling that the work is exempt from the restrictions of the Watershed Protection Regulations. The DCR provided a detailed explanation of their ruling in the document provided to this Commission. In brief, the work is "grandfathered" as being for a public structure existing before September 1, 1989, and the proposed work simply replaces the existing structure. The proposed work still needs Section 404 certificate from the Corps of Engineers, which must be done through the Massachusetts Department of Transportation. The Town has done all that they were required to do when this Commission issued a negative determination following a site visit.

Approval Not Required Actions

None.

Election of Commission Chair and Recorder

Bob Clark offered to continue for another year as Commission Chair, and members unanimously accepted his offer. John Baker offered to continue as recorder for the next year, and was also unanimously approved.

On this subject, members briefly discussed the issue of Bob Clark's eventual retirement as Commission Chair. All members agreed that it would be best if a new Chair were identified before Bob retired, so that the incoming Chair could work with Bob for a length period of time to become more familiar with all the things that the Chair does for the Commission.

Members also voted unanimously to accept an offer to join the Commission by Ms. Abbie Castagnaro to join as a full member. Abbie must be formally appointed by the Select Board for her membership to become official.

Other Business

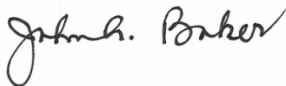
The Open Space and Recreation Plan has now been distributed to several public places—the Select Board, Harvard Forest, and the Public Library.

Miscellaneous

Bob Clark reported that work on the Bob Marshall trail will resume this fall, hopefully with the construction of a small bridge over Nelson Brook. Bob also briefly reported on the history of the area of Nelson Brook. There is also some interest in getting a state historian or archaeologist to the site to inspect some unusual features. Members discussed the idea of organizing a walk along portions of the Bob Marshall trail on Old Home Day, which will be held on Saturday, August 23d this year. There was interest as well in organizing a short walk and discussion about trees in the area of the Town center, where several historic and “unusual” trees exist.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John A. Baker".

John A. Baker
Recorder