

Warner Conservation Commission

Minutes of Meeting
January 4, 2017 at 7:00 PM

Attending: Nancy Martin, Doug Allen, Mike Amaral, Phil Stockwell, Rob Nute, Alice Chamberlin, Scott Warren, and Russ St.Pierre (recording).

Also present: Ross Bennett (Henniker CC) and Andy Duncan

Increased ATV Activity in the Mink Hills

The Commission discussed the recent Selectmen's decision to grant the Bound Tree ATV Club's request for expanded use of Class VI roads. Of primary concern is the condition of the roads and the effect on them from increased use. Also of concern are impacts to private property that have occurred when ATVs leave the designated trails. The Commission heard from Ross Bennett, a member of the Henniker Conservation Commission. He described damage that has occurred to private property and roads in Henniker, and the associated increase in Town costs for oversight and enforcement. The Commission also heard from Andy Duncan who is an owner and steward of conservation property on Badger Lane. He described damage to the town's road, as documented in annual monitoring reports from the Forest Society. His biggest concern, however, was the damage to the conservation property itself caused by trespass, when the motorized vehicles leave the trails and venture on to property. He noted how he has avoided some planned timber harvesting because he does not want to create skid trails that will become an attractive nuisance for ATVs. He also described some of the actions taken to prohibit further damage.

The Commission was concerned that the Selectmen approved the trail use expansion without hearing the concerns of private property owners. While the issue was noticed in the Selectmen's meeting notice, property owners were not made aware of the pending issue as they had when ATV use of Town roads was originally considered several years ago. The Commission was also concerned that the expanded use was granted without an opportunity for the Selectmen to see the damage that has already occurred. While noting that it was unlikely the local club members were responsible for private property damage, it was also noted that once the roads or trails are open for ATV use, there is really no way to control who uses them. It was also noted that the Town has invested substantially in the acquisition of conservation easements in this area and is responsible for their protection.

It was decided that the Conservation Commission would write a letter to the Selectmen, asking them to reconsider their decision. In addition, the Commission will ask the Selectmen to convene a meeting of the ATV and snowmobile clubs, private property owners, appropriate Town personnel, and the Commission to discuss the use of these Town roads and the associated issues.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes:

The minutes of December 7, 2016 were approved with a few minor corrections.

Land Protection Updates:

Collins Parcel – Nancy talked to Ruth Collins regarding the next steps in the process.

Willow Brook/Bartlett Loop – Scott Warren sent a letter to Five Rivers Conservation Trust asking them, in turn, to submit a letter to the Board of Selectmen expressing an interest in holding the easement on the town-owned parcel.

State-owned Parcel (Map 7, Lot 1) – The Selectmen are awaiting a response to their offer from the State DOT..

Mt. Kearsarge Indian Museum –nothing new to report.

Warner Hiking Trails

Rob Nute described the Stewardship Network trail workshop he attended and the information available on their web page. Doug said he would contact Parks & Rec members to begin discussion on how to combine forces to encourage more use of the Town's hiking trails.

Warner River Nomination:

Nothing new to report

Wetland Issues:

There was one new utility management notification from Eversource for right-of-way work to report. Russ handed out a summary of the Town's 2016 permits, which included: two forestry notifications, two road maintenance notifications, one utility maintenance notification, one shoreland permit by notification, and one expedited minimum permit.

New Business

Nancy noted there was an upcoming training session available for easement monitoring

The meeting was adjourned.

The next meeting will be on February 1, 2017 at 7:00 PM.