



Mason Conservation Commission Minutes

March 3, 2011
7:00 pm to 9:30 pm

In Attendance

- Bob Dillberger
- Bob Larochelle
- Barbara Devore
- Liz Fletcher
- Rob Doyle
- Ann Moser
- Anna Faiello

Special Meeting to prepare for Town Meeting (warrant article 14).

Liz compared conservation parcel area numbers and the tax map and found some conflicting values. Bob L. will check the RR deed and double check the area for parcel A-5.

Bob D. found some very good info on the NHACC web site which he used to make very nice handouts with: Conservation in Mason at a Glance (pie chart), excerpts from Municipal Conservation Fund Guidebook - Managing Growth, and Cost of Community Services Study which shows justification for changing the land use change tax distribution should be based on extensive data collection, not the selectmen's whim!

Liz created a handout from her research: Average land use change income is currently 36k per year. Tax rate impact is .158 per \$1000. The cost of giving the land use change tax to the conservation commission is \$43.77 per year to tax payers with an average \$277k value home.

We all agreed we need to steer away from the selectmen and focus our arguments on how Conservation keeps the tax rate from rising. Thrust must be designed to persuade the voters they must choose between short term taxes savings and maintaining rural character.

Liz thought we must also show we are being good stewards of the land. Ann mentioned the importance conservation plays in improving the quality of life.

Bob D and Liz will combine forces to produce a handout with cover letter using his pie chart, and Liz's fact sheet.

Barbara's research showed we cannot distribute our information at the polls on voting day but we can put them in the Grapevine web version and do private mailings.

Whatever we mail out we need 525 copies. Cathy Schwank has also reserved a table so we can distribute info before town meeting.

A short and sweet version will be used for the mail out. A more detailed version will be handed out on town meeting night and bulk email distribution. Rough message: If you value rural character, come to town meeting and vote against article 14 to preserve it! We can also elaborate on why we need the money and how it was spent.

For town meeting rebuttal strategy: Liz will speak to finances, Bob will speak to the myths that conservation costs us and how we are working on the NRI to position ourselves to better manage our lands to be self sustaining. Ann will speak to value of rural character - benefits to horse owners, serenity, boy scouts, and clean water, which is not a waist of money! This is our gift for future generations. Rob Doyle could share about funding the efforts to eradicate invasives. Charlie Moser and Barbara Schulze were also mentioned as possible contributors.

Liz calculated that we have conserved about 2000 acres since we started receiving the land use change tax in 2001.

Bob D asked: What would happen to the tax rate if all the land we preserved was developed? His rough and conservative calculations showed that had the 2000 acres been developed rather than conserved our tax would be \$2000 higher!

Bob D mentioned the commission can legally fund the cost incurred to defend the land use change tax. Liz made a motion to reimburse conservation commission members for printing mailing expenses from the general fund. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Barbara volunteered to host a Letter stuffing party on Monday night March 7th at 7 pm at 801 Valley road. Stir fry, apple pie and wine will be served! Everyone is invited.