



Mason Conservation Commission Minutes

March 9, 2011
7:00 pm to 9:45 pm

In Attendance

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

Voted unanimously to accept February minutes.

Voted unanimously to accept minutes from special meeting on Mar. 3.

Reviewed plans to speak on Warrant Article 14 at Town Meeting. Liz will address finances, followed by Bob D. who will speak about the cost of development vs. conservation, followed by Ann who will discuss the benefits of conservation.

Met with Gordon Russell and Ian McSweeney of the Russell Foundation to discuss funding for conservation projects. We reviewed current conservation properties in town, and presented the recent proposal from Jerry Anderson (see Feb. minutes). Mr. Russell started Piscataquog R. Watershed Foundation in 1970. He's a retired long time teacher of biology & env. science. The Foundation has protected "tens of thousands of acres" in that watershed, and is now broadening its perspective. They specialize in knowing funding sources and ways to access them, plus extensive real estate experience. They help with services related to land protection, such as grant writing. They provide these services at no charge. The Foundation is not a land trust so they don't hold land titles or easements. Instead they connect landowners to those organizations and help set up the connections needed for land protection.

Ian mentioned the Wetlands Reserve Program from NRCS. Ian suggested we look at it on the NRCS Web site for more info. They're currently funded at \$1.8M. This program covers %100 of the costs of purchasing wetlands and putting it under conservation easement. Only town burden is helping landowner apply and shepherding the project. Could be a source of funds to resurrect the Nissitissit R. Headwaters project. Protected area includes 300 ft. buffer around wetland, plus a 1:1 match of non-qualifying land.

Reviewed our "brochure" for distribution at Town Meeting and made some last-minute edits. Bob D. will e-mail an updated version. Barbara will submit the document to FedEx Office (aka Kinko's) for printing. Job will include 150 collated stapled copies. Bob L. will pick up the printouts.

Barbara reported on a follow-up discussion with Chris Guiry regarding the Forestry Committee's cooperation with the Cons. Comm. on invasive plant control. Chris say's the Forestry Comm. is excited about working with us on this issue, and suggested we focus first on the railroad trail. Chris will be searching for licensed folks to apply the herbicide, and mentioned that the Forestry Comm. is willing to expend funds for this effort.

Discussed the lease on the Old Ashby Rd. property (the A-frame). The lease is up July 1. We discussed raising the rent as seems appropriate for the times, but have yet to agree on a dollar amount. We'll invite Dennis Graham to our May meeting to discuss the matter.

Discussed Ed Fortin's request to take beaver-downed wood (two large oaks) off the Potter land on Greenville Rd. Bob L. will talk to Bill Downs to get an estimate of the quantity of wood and an estimate of value. We agreed that it's OK for Ed to take the wood but we need to receive a reasonable payment in return.

Discussed Winter Wanderer's request to leave RR trail gates open during snowmobiling season. This is a new request this year and it's not clear what's behind the request. The gates are currently open (apparently having been opened by the snowmobile club). We agreed they are to be closed immediately. We'll consider this request for next year's season.

Voted to pay **Bob Laroche \$90.25** for printing costs associated with our informational mailing regarding Warrant Article 14. Voted to pay **Barbara Devore \$187.00** as reimbursement for postage also associated with the mailing. Both amounts to come from the Conservation General Fund.

At the polls on Tuesday information was distributed on two invasive insects, the hemlock woolly adelgid, which has been found in Mason, and the Asian long-horned beetle.

Handouts on upcoming programs, possible future ones and a listing of past programs also were distributed. (See attached.)

Next two programs:

Eyes on Owls on Friday, March 18 with Live Birds in Mason School's all purpose room

2:10 PM ~ Mason School children and senior citizens; 7:00 PM ~ All townspeople invited

Following the program, a late evening owl prowling under a full moon meet at the entrance to the Russell-Abbott State Forest

Salamander Migration on Thursday, April 7, at 7:30 PM at Mason Town Hall with Rick Glatz