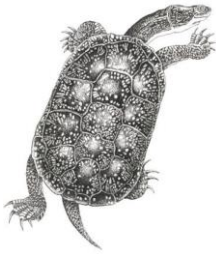


Gilmanton Conservation Commission

PO Box 550

Gilmanton NH 03237-0550

conservation@gilmantonnh.org (603) 267-6700 ext. 122



Minutes of October 13, 2020

APPROVED

Call to order: The meeting was called to order by Chairman Dick de Seve. Those present included Chairman Dick de Seve, Alternate Member Sue Hale-de Seve, Vice Chair Jennifer Baker, Member Patrick Hackley, Member Ed Bernstine, Member Paula Gilman, Alt. Member Thomas Dombrowski, and Member Stephen Hopkins along with the Conservation Commission Clerk Bre Daigneault. There were no members of the public attending. Due to the COVID-19 emergency order, this meeting was held virtually by utilizing the *Zoom* platform.

Strategic Planning-

Members reviewed and discussed the Commission's list of initiatives. Members had last spoken about ranking the list in order of priority. Chair de Seve requested members to review the list; this will act as a guidance document for the Commission. Member Hopkins inquired of members if there was anything additional members would like to add to the list. Members agreed the NRI is a number one priority. Member Hopkins felt updating the other lists would cascade from the NRI. Chair de Seve agreed. Expanding on wetlands, town forests, and night skies would also go along with the NRI. Member Hopkins does not believe there is a chapter on night skies. Chair de Seve stated there have been a few towns that have either adopted or proposed ordinances to do with night skies to keep from being overly affected by bright lighting. Member Hackley stated there is a line in the NRI, though it is brief and can be expanded upon. It is an important feature that may fall under the zoning side. It could be a recommendation from the GCC. Member Bernstine volunteered to write a paragraph on night skies and solar pollution. felt the GCC should keep up with other boards, such as the Planning Board to work with them on Zoning Ordinances. Member Gilman suggested considering a zoning regulation to prevent building over a certain elevation, a ridgeline protection. Members agreed it would be a way to perfect the scenic vistas. Chair de Seve felt the priority should be to evaluate the effectiveness as holders of conservation easements. There are a few easements that need to be monitored on a yearly basis. But there are many other easements that have not been monitored for some time. Chair gave an example of the heirs of a property with a conservation easement had clear cut it a few years ago, against the terms of the easement. The only way it was found was due to the monitoring. The property owners were sued; they ended up having to pay a fine and replant the entire area. VC Baker agrees with the chairman after hearing his reasoning. Tying this in with updating the list, having the GPS units, and working on a flow chart on monitoring easements. Member Bernstine suggested creating a monitoring schedule. It was discussed to prioritize the easements that need monitoring and to have members assigned to the easements that need yearly monitoring. Chair de Seve and Alt. Hale- de Seve volunteered to work on updating the monitoring list. Member Gilman felt increasing the land use change tax should be a priority for the upcoming year. Member Hopkins suggested waiting until they could build a case to warrant the request for extra money. Member Hackley stated the LUCT is a way for towns to recoup lost revenue from current use land. He feels this would be a controversial request and agrees they should have good rationale for this request. The rates of conversion in Gilmanton are higher than surrounding towns. A warrant article would need to be placed on the ballot. The deadlines for creating a warrant article would be reviewed. Member Hackley stated the numbers for each town in the county are easily attainable for comparisons. Chair de Seve felt increasing the GCC participation and input with the Planning Board to help them better understand the value of conservation land in the community. This could help strengthen the argument for increasing the LUCT share. Member Hackley inquired as to how the value gets returned to the community. Is land value more valuable in Gilmanton? Member Hackley stated

Gilmanton is one of the fastest growing towns in Belknap County, showing the desirability of the town. Member Hopkins shared the UNH Coop. Ext. did a briefing paper on the "Nature Economy". They identify tourism from recreation, health and wellness benefits, and why people want to live in communities that are more attractive. Member Bernstine felt more quantitative data may help. He sees a renaissance of local economy coming out of this crisis we are in. More of jams and jellies and boards made locally because of the natural resources in the area. Member Gilman added this is being done because of farms. She feels the agricultural portion must be pushed. Chair de Seve read the remaining items on the list of initiatives- create trail signs, maps, improve trail access, lead trail walks; engage high school students and Boy Scouts in projects; develop social media strategies and presence. Vice Chair Baker felt these could be worked together. Could find a high school student to aid with creating a Facebook page and advertise trail walks on social media. They could look into this as a student's community service. This would help in getting younger people involved with conservation. V Chair Baker recommended sending letters to the high schools. She inquired as to trail head signs. Chair de Seve stated these could be trail head signs or natural markers along the trails. Additionally, there are trails that have not been mapped out yet. Member Hackley noticed there does need to be a revision in the town forest area. They really do need a management plan for the Smithers Town Forest along with improved access. On a side note, Chair de Seve added he had spoken with Paul Osborne of the Gilmanton Snow mobile club regarding the improvements to the trails. He stated at this time, they would not be moving forward due to lack of funding for the improvements. Member Hackley added there is a survey from residents on town forests and how they would like to see the forests utilized. Member Gilman added a survey should be done of farms in towns. These could be incorporated into one survey. Member Hopkins recapped the initiatives in order of importance from their conversation:

1. NRI
 - A. Combined with updating the town lists (Conservation easements, town forests, farms, etc.)
 - B. Opportunities relating to wetlands, town forests, and night skies
2. Evaluate effectiveness as holders of conservation easements – work on calendar & workflow
3. Increase LUCT – look at timelines and what they will need for a successful outcome
4. Become more active participant in Planning Board reviews
5. Engagement program
 - A. Social Media presence
 - B. Community Service- engage with high school students
 - C. Trail walks and improve trail access

Member Gilman looked at some surrounding town's NRIs. Gilford and Wolfeboro had updated in 2011 and in both their NRI's, they cited Gilmanton's NRI as a reference. Chair de Seve had reviewed others as well. He has made some notes at some sections that could be incorporated.

Other

Chair de Seve relayed he had been contacted by John and Ursula Allen who are interested in donating 189 acres they own on Middle Route to the GCC. This land abuts the Betty Smithers Town Forest. This would be discussed at the next meeting. An easement could be placed on the property. Member Hackley felt a title search, survey, and ESA should be completed prior.

Meeting Adjourned

Respectfully Submitted,

Bre Daigneault, Conservation Admin.

Attested by: _____ on _____

Dick de Seve, Chair

Date