

BRENTWOOD CONSERVATION COMMISSION Meeting of

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July 14, 2010

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM by Chair Rob Wofchuck. Also attending were members Doug Cowie, Jody Kaufman, Ray Jones and Emily Schmalzer. Alternates Reid Bunker and Victor Schmalzer were also present.

Victor and Reid were both accorded voting rights by simultaneous motion and unanimous vote.

The minutes of the June session were proposed and accepted with the noting of three typos.

Easement monitoring: Reid and Doug surveyed Easement 1 of the four parcels associated with Commercial Drive. Reid mentioned that they had great difficulty finding the boundaries. We proposed asking the Planning Board to require that GPS coordinates for each marker be posted on each official map.

At 7:15 Rob opened the Public Hearing to discuss the proposal as presented in the agenda:

To spend approximately \$2,200 out of the Conservation Fund to hire an organization to write a grant for the New Hampshire Aquatic Resource Mitigation Program

The issue had been legally posted in the Carriage Town News, however, no townspeople presented themselves. Accordingly, at 7:30 the committee members moved and voted unanimously to approve it. The public hearing was closed.

William and Rebecca Dunham then came in to discuss with us a proposal they are making to clean up a derelict field on the conservation property they bought from Roger and Kathy Nekton two years ago. There are several issues which they want us to consider, all of which they have already discussed with various others, notably Phil Auger, forester with the Rockingham County Extension Service. The mostly small trees have been cut, and the Dunhams would like to turn the area into a field for some sort of agricultural purpose. Initially that was to be a chestnut tree farm, though they are having second thoughts about the practicability of such a project. For whatever purpose, the field will need at least the following: 1) stump removal, 2) removal and disposition of debris dumped on the site in the distant past, and 3) repair of a "swale," which in this instance is apparently a pit about six feet deep which drains to a spring in the woods.

The Dunhams presented us with photographs of the site, showing the partially cleared field with a pile of decomposing unpainted lumber. The committee was in agreement that all of the debris will most wisely be removed from the site. The Dunhams did not include pictures of the swale, but Jody confirmed that she has seen it. It presently is a menace to any machinery that gets too close. There are a number of tree stumps, but only a few, perhaps four, which are larger than 12 inches in diameter, according to Bill.

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The Conservation Commission reminded all that the purpose of the easement was to protect the quality of the water in the adjacent Exeter River. We feel that any chosen set of solutions should be in accordance with that.

Phil Auger, one of the foresters at the Rockingham County Extension, has given the Dunhams a list of possible solutions to the problem of stump removal. The method of grinding the stumps in situ seems to be the optimal choice as far as disturbing the soil. However, we respect the problem that cost may present. Excavation is worse because of the disturbance of the topsoil, but if indeed few of the stumps are very large, perhaps that's not so bad. There are also options for disposing of the stumps. We think that burying them would create a large disturbance of the soil and would advise a different approach.

As to the "swale," Phil also proposed a couple of solutions: either to leave it as is (with presumably some sort of marker such as a fence to keep machinery from blundering into it) or to fill it in and install a drainage system with a pipe leading to the spring. The spring is evidently several hundred yards away from the river, still we worried about whether piping runoff from the fields into a tributary brook might present a problem for the river water quality in the future when the soil might be amended. The commission preferred to leave the grass swale as is and was not in favor of a piped solution. We advised professional consultation for this situation.

If the Dunhams decide to go ahead with their chestnut project, or switch to a blueberry plantation, the soil will need to be amended. The current pH is 6.0, which is too basic for chestnuts or blueberries. The Dunham's consultants recommend that an amount of sulfate be added to bring the pH to 4.5. This issue is moot for the moment, since some sort of grass crop will be the first plan.

Rob will compose a letter for the Dunhams outlining these thoughts, and asking them to keep us apprised of their progress. Emily offered thanks to the Dunhams for their exemplary, thorough and careful approach to this matter, and for their including us in their deliberations.

We returned to the subject of grant applications. Len Lord will be returning at our next meeting to discuss this matter. Heather Dudley-Tatman is interested in spear-heading one of these grants.

Doug tells us that he has not had much response to the Mills Falls residents relative to their recognition of the property rights of the Wilsons and the integrity of the conservation buffer between them. He will continue to try to reach them.

Open Space projects continue.

Our next meeting will be on August 11, again in the Town Office Building at 7.

Meeting adjourned.