

**Thornton Conservation Commission
Monthly Meeting
Tuesday, February 14, 2023 - 3:00 p.m. at
Thornton Town Hall**

Minutes

Present: Mike Boisvert, Katri Gurney, Al Lewis, Jerry Sobolewski

Absent: Myrtle Lewis, Maryellen Sakura.

Guests: Joe Peznola

Al Lewis called the meeting to order at 3:03 PM. Katri Gurney arrived at 3:15 PM.

The minutes of the previous meeting were distributed electronically. A motion to accept the minutes of the January 10, 2023 meeting as presented passed unanimously, with 3 members present at the time of the vote.

1. Construction Project Updates/Thornton Planning Board Meetings

- Alden Beauchemin of Keyland Enterprises plans to install 3 culverts and is filing an expedited Wetlands permit application that requires the pre-approval of the Thornton Conservation Commission in order for him to proceed. Myrtle Lewis followed up regarding if the application was filed and has not received a response. Al Lewis indicated he will follow up with the Thornton Town Administrator whether he completed the application and requested a signature from a Town Official.
- Joe Peznola shared what he knew of the Preserve at the Pemigewasset Development. This is an 18-acre subdivision off Route 3 near Ham Farm Road. This will be a cluster development with 18 single family homes with shared common land. The developer will be appearing at the next Planning Board meeting, February 16th for an update on the 50 foot Right of Way. The developer has also submitted an Alteration of Terrain application to the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services.

2. Robin's Nest Road Parking Area Project – Next Steps

- Joe Peznola, chairman of Thornton's Economic Development Committee [EDC] and appointed by the Thornton Board of Selectmen [BOS] indicated that the Board of Selectmen approved going to Town Counsel for an opinion of the Town's liability if they managed the Robin's Nest Road/Cross Road Boat Launch area.
- Joe Peznola shared a rough plan he put together regarding Robin's Nest Road/Cross Road Boat Launch area using parcel and LIDAR information obtained from NH Granit through UNH and married it with some available aerial imagery. In reviewing FEMA Floodplain mapping, he believes floodplain is somewhere around elevation 474. He darkened that contour on the plan and proposed the toilet area and picnic tables above that elevation. Ideas that Joe brought forward:
 - The map included a new access road to redirect traffic from Robin's Nest Road to explore alternative access to eliminate the negative impacts on the Robin's Nest neighborhood from people accessing the river in the summer. The plan would require approval of a railroad crossing and DES approval in addition to the work needed to work with DOT.
 - The Department of Transportation [DOT] owns the land along Route 3 alongside the railroad tracks that could be used for this new access road and then have it descend to the existing location. The section descending to the existing location could be built at a 10% sloping grade, with erosion control measures such as draining ditches across the road and on both sides.

- The map noted an improved flood resistant boat launch that would benefit access to the Pemigewasset River for search & rescue operations and be handicapped accessible.
 - The plan maximizes parking and offered opportunities for portable toilets and picnic tables above the floodplain. Parking area could be improved and made flood resistant.
 - A wetlands permit would be needed for any construction in this area.
- Next step is that Joe Peznola will contact the DOT to share this plan and determine if they agree with conceptual design. Joe knows someone from the DOT that he can contact from his work on Thornton's Economic Development Committee. They will most likely request a physical survey, stormwater design, boat launch schematics and more. This would all be part of an overall engineering design that would cost between \$15,000 to \$20,000 that could be obtained from grants.
- Discussion ensued about at what point does TCC approach the Board of Selectmen once more regarding signing the Memorandum of Agreement in this process. BOS has been lukewarm regarding supporting this project. We need to address their discomfort with potential liability, show them this rough plan to help them better visualize this project, and make wording changes to the Memorandum of Agreement as needed for their signature.

3. Riverfront Property Presentation By DES

Mike Boisvert contacted the chairpersons of the Campton Conservation Commission and Woodstock Conservation Commission regarding their support for the Department of Environmental Services Presentation for Landowner Shoreland Presentation. Chairpersons would bring this up at their next February meeting. A member from the Campton Conservation Commission suggested asking Owl's Nest if they could provide a venue given their ongoing relationship with DES. Mike Boisvert reached out to Myrtle Lewis since she has contacts with Owl's Nest regarding this possibility.

4. Thornton Natural Resources Inventory [NRI]

- Mike Boisvert shared the most recent update electronically prior to this meeting and solicited comments for each page.
- Question was posed as to why a Natural Resources Inventory is needed. It was a recommendation from the 2013 Thornton Master Plan. It's a fundamental task of Conservation Commissions according the NH State Statute RSA 36-A. An NRI provides a foundation for informed decision making [land use planning, conservation protection, Master Plan], is a vital part of the town's cultural, economic and community structure; and identifies resources threatened by human population and over exploitation.
- Mike Boisvert reviewed who has been assigned to each section:
 - Mike Boisvert: Overview, Topography, Surface Geology, Forest Resources and Wetland Resources [Mike is attending a New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions 6-part workshop on wetlands].
 - Katri Gurney: Water Resources.
 - Mary Ellen Sakura: Agricultural Lands and Areas of Ecological Significance. However, from a prior meeting, she probably cannot complete these sections. Nobody has volunteered to take these sections.
 - Myrtle Lewis: Wildlife and Historical & Cultural Resources.
 - Jerry Sobolewski: Conservation Lands and Scenic Quality.
- Suggestion made that we could work on one section each year however that would take a number of years to complete. Goal at our prior meeting was to complete by the end of this year. We will need assistance from a paid NRI professional to complete.
- We discussed information that may not be important in Thornton's NRI and possibly be omitted so members can move on and work on other sections. If important than we would need to engage an NRI professional to assist. Discussion ensued where specific

statistics are missing and highlighted in Section 1, Overview. From our perspective, they don't seem important but could be for someone else involved with land use planning.

- Review of each page led to the following conclusions:
 - Map 5, Sand and Gravel Resources not helpful and will be omitted. Mike Boisvert will contact Town Administrator for a list of permitted Sand & Gravel operations in Thornton including acres and will place a table in the Sand and Gravel section instead.
 - Groundwater section. Katri Gurney will do some research into the number of small community wells in Thornton and which developments have them. She is also working on comparing water ordinances in Thornton to best practices and make recommendations to the Town for further improvements.
 - Scenic Quality. Jerry Sobolewski shared what he has and we agreed that a couple of the pictures taken would be a good addition to start this section. Jerry would choose which ones he liked best. Mike will incorporate what was provided for Jerry's review. Unsure if Jerry will be including information about Robin's Nest, Wildlife Management Areas, bicycling/snowmobiling routes, etc. into this section.
 - Conservation Lands. Discussed that this should be easy since the Town does not have any however any landowner who has a conservation easement, even if they do not allow public access, would be considered as conservation land. Jerry indicated he would research further. Mike will provide Jerry some verbiage to help him get started.
 - Maps. Overall maps seem adequate but it would seem worthwhile to have an NRI professional review to determine with a modest budget, which ones would be worthwhile for improvement.
- Mike Boisvert indicated he will place the existing version of the Natural Resources Inventory in TCC's Google Drive for members to work on. Katri Gurney indicated she can work on making some formatting changes including inserting footnotes in her Water Resources section.

5. Other Business

- Al Lewis invited members to attend a Regional Conservation Commission meeting on February 22nd. Unsure if anyone from TCC can attend.
- Suggestion made whether a TCC review should be required as part of the Planning Board approving new developments. Some towns require this. This would be a matter of TCC offering suggestions, for example planting trees, with the final Planning Board approval not contingent upon TCC approval. Probably would require a change in existing town ordinances. Suggestion was tabled.
- Who will be attending the next Planning Board Meeting for Thursday, February 16th. Katri Gurney asked what is required when attending. Taking minutes? Represent TCC and provide opinions on behalf of TCC? She is not up to speed with existing projects being monitored by the Planning Board. Unsure of objectives.
- Mike Boisvert was approached to determine if TCC would like to get involved with other local conservation commissions in writing a conservation article for the local newspaper, Record Enterprise. TCC would be in rotation of every nine months. TCC is focused with the completing NRI at the moment. Suggested made to follow-up with Myrtle Lewis to determine if she is interested, otherwise Mike Boisvert will reply that TCC has other priorities at the moment.

- 6. Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:05 pm. The next Commission meeting will be on Tuesday, March 14th at 3:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Mike Boisvert, Thornton Conservation Committee Member