

**DURHAM CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING  
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2020 – 7:00 PM  
DURHAM TOWN HALL - COUNCIL CHAMBERS - DURHAM, NH**

*Note: Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, most members and presenters attended via Zoom video conferencing while a limited number were in Council Chambers.*

Members Present: Vice-Chair Sally Needell; Coleen Fuerst; Walter Rous; Alternates Liz Durfee, Mary Ann Krebs and Roanne Robbins.

Also Present: Michael Behrendt, Town Planner; Ellen Snyder, Land Stewardship Coordinator; and Lucie Bryar, Minute Taker

Absent: Jake Kritzer and John Nachilly

**I & II. Call to Order and Roll Call.**

Vice-Chair Sally Needell conducted the meeting since Chair Bart McDonough resigned last month. She called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. and asked for roll call. Ms. Needell seated Alternates Liz Durfee, Mary Ann Krebs and Roanne Robbins as voting members this evening.

Mr. Behrendt noted that Town Council is expected to name Mary Ann Krebs as a regular Commission member at its October meeting.

Vice-Chair Needell then read a required statement pursuant to the Governor’s Emergency Order #12 pertaining to meeting remotely during the Covid-19 pandemic and outlining how the public can continue to participate. More information is available on the town of Durham website.

**III. Approval of Agenda. Ms. Krebs MOVED to approve the agenda as presented, SECONDED by Ms. Fuerst, APPROVED unanimously, 6-0, Motion carries.**

**IV. Public Comments:** There were none this evening.

**V. Oyster River Bridge.** Update by Dennis Meadows about proposed pedestrian bridge over the Oyster River leading from Thompson Lane to Stevens Woods.

Mr. Meadows was present to give a summary of the project, which started almost two years ago. Following a bidding process, he will sign a contract with a construction company this week and work should start on the pedestrian bridge in mid-October.

As a recap, he said his Committee was charged with three tasks:

- Purchase a 25-acre parcel from the Durham School Department without taxpayer funds; Work to preserve the parcel for environmental and passive recreation purposes.  
**Completed in October 2019.**
- Develop a trail network from Orchard Drive south to Doe Farm.  
**90% Complete;** A kiosk, map and parking are still to be finished.

## DCC FINAL MINUTES – SEPTEMBER 24, 2020

- Construct a pedestrian bridge over the Oyster River. Mr. Meadows showed slides of the area and said the bridge will be a 100-foot long aluminum cascade truss bridge. Future plans call for an ADA sidewalk to be built to the bridge.  
**In Progress with plans to complete by year-end.**

A breakdown of project costs include:

- Land purchase (\$150K) and surveying/closing costs (\$10K): \$160,000
- Trail Improvements: \$20,000
- Pedestrian Bridge: \$325,000 – including \$75K for the aluminum span; \$80K for engineering, permitting and supervision – with remainder of costs due to abutments, archeological, environmental and historical studies, etc.

The project has been funded through private citizen contributions (48%); an Escrow Loan (21%); State grant (16%); UNH Right-of-way payment (6%); Two Foundation grants (5%); Public Service Company of NH donation (2%); Town of Durham (1%) and Conservation Commission (1%).

The Fundraising Committee is now working to pay back the escrow loan and still accepting contributions through the town website or the Southeast Land Trust. Mr. Meadows said Town Council will likely hold a public hearing and take a final vote in October on naming the pedestrian bridge in memory of Kenny Rotner – a physician and public servant who served on the School Board, Town Council and Land Stewardship Committee.

Mr. Behrendt asked if there will be maintenance costs for the bridge and Mr. Meadows replied there should be no maintenance required for the next 40 or 50 years. Vice-Chair Needell thanked Mr. Meadows for the tremendous time and energy he has put into the project.

### **VI. Land Stewardship.** Ellen Snyder, Land Stewardship Coordinator.

Ms. Snyder said Town Council approved an ordinance prohibiting horses on town trails. She then asked the Conservation Commission to formally appoint three at-large members to specific terms on the Land Stewardship Committee; As discussed at the previous meeting, these members were informally appointed and had no set terms.

She is recommending: Ann Welsh (Term ending September 2023); Vin Dell'Ova (Term ending September 2022) and Gale Carey (Term ending September 2021.)

She clarified there are no term limits, but the individuals would need to be re-appointed or replaced once their term expires. The goal is to give other community members a chance to serve, if interested, and to give a more formal structure to the Committee. All other members are appointed by their respective town boards or commissions.

**Mr. Rous MOVED to appoint the three individuals (named above) to at-large positions on the Land Stewardship Committee for the specified terms; SECONDED by Ms. Fuerst, APPROVED unanimously, 6-0. Motion carries.**

Ms. Snyder gave some background information on an Eagle Scout project prior to inviting scout Ryan Belanger to come forward. She said Wagon Hill trails and bridges were assessed earlier this year and a number of them need improvements or re-construction. Site 7 (shown on a map) is a cross-trail that gets very muddy in the spring and could use a boardwalk, which Ryan will build as part of his Eagle Scout project.

Scout Ryan Belanger then came to the podium and said he is a life scout with Troop 154 in Durham. He is planning to build a 35-foot boardwalk connecting two existing boardwalks. He has assisted with removal of invasive species and DPW has already removed trees. He is now approaching Home Depot and other retailers for donations of materials, but pressure-treated lumber is not widely available due to the pandemic.

He is requesting a donation from the Conservation Commission, especially since many scout fundraising efforts have been suspended. He estimates material costs to be about \$700 and provided Commissioners with a detailed list. Ryan will work with his grandfather (a former contractor) to complete the boardwalk, hopefully by April 2021.

Mr. Rous asked if it will be wheelchair accessible when complete and Ms. Snyder said it will be slightly elevated. Mr. Rous said a 4x4 curb could possibly be added to make it more accessible.

**Mr. Rous MOVED to approve up to \$700 from the Conservation Fund for materials to construct a new boardwalk at Wagon Hill Farm as described; SECONDED by Ms. Fuerst, APPROVED unanimously, 6-0, Motion carries.**

Ms. Snyder provided a few more updates to the Commission, including:

- There's going to be a winter timber harvest at Doe Farm;
- Removal of invasive species is ongoing at a number of sites
- Easement monitoring is continuing at a few sites, including the Beaudette Property;
- Some members of the Land Stewardship Committee went to Moat Island with the Police Department to assess illegal campsites, campfires and other safety concerns. The Committee will post better signage indicating it's for day use only. Mr. Nachilly will take some members of the PD on a bike ride through the trails so they can become more familiar should their assistance be needed at the remote location.

VII. **Application Materials for WCOD and SPOD Projects.** Proposed set of questions about wetlands and water features and resource list to be given to applicants and revised application and checklist for Wetland Conservation and Shoreland Protection projects.

The Commission has been working on improving application materials and resources for a few months. Mr. Behrendt made final updates and edits and he asked if there were any additional changes this evening; there were none.

Thanks to Alternate Liz Durfee, who is an environmental consultant, the application package now includes a list of helpful online resources that applicants can reference. The checklist also provides more detailed guidance for Commissioners.

All new materials will be given to applicants and made available on the town website.

VIII. **Election of Chair**

A new Chair needs to be elected since Bart McDonough resigned last month after moving out of state. Mr. Behrendt noted the Chair needs to be a regular Commission member, not an alternate. Mr. Kritzer has offered to become an alternate if one of the alternate members would like to serve as Chair.

**Mr. Rous MOVED to nominate Sally Needell to serve as Chair; SECONDED by Ms. Fuerst, APPROVED unanimously, 6-0, Motion carries.**

It was decided the Commission will select a Vice-Chair at its next meeting.

IX. **Other Business**

Ms. Needell said four members of the Commission have become active with a Taking Action for Wildlife group, which includes NH Fish & Game and UNH Extension. The sessions they attended focused on land conservation; wildlife corridors, climate change and other topics. The Durham group is now seeking to identify a project they can work on and asking anyone with ideas to submit them.

Ms. Needell said the topic of Natural Resources Inventories came up and one idea is to have the group look at small town-owned parcels that don't have an active conservation role right now. It's unclear if Durham has such an inventory, but Mr. Behrendt will research if an inventory is part of the Master Plan.

In other business, Ms. Robbins said the NH Association of Conservation Commissions is having their 50th Annual Meeting on November 7th. She will send out a link for those who would like to take advantage of the workshops.

Mr. Rous said he attended a workshop on protecting drinking water and learned that DES offers grants to towns to establish drinking water protection zones or protocols. He's not sure who in town government should be notified. Mr. Behrendt said he will check with the Public Works Department.

X. **Review of Minutes:** July 27, 2020 minutes

**Mr. Rous MOVED to approve the July 27, 2020 minutes as submitted; SECONDED by Ms. Krebs, APPROVED unanimously, 6-0, Motion carries.**

XI. **Adjournment**

## DCC FINAL MINUTES – SEPTEMBER 24, 2020

**With no further business, Ms. Needell MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:16 p.m., SECONDED by Mr. Rous, APPROVED unanimously, 6-0, Motion carries.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Lucie Bryar, Minute Taker  
Durham Conservation Commission

***Note: These written minutes are intended only as a general summary of the meeting. For more complete information, please refer to the DCAT22 On Demand videotape of the entire proceedings on the town of Durham website.***