

Approved

Calais Conservation Commission Minutes

Date: January 4, 2017

Location: Calais Town Office

Present: Stephanie Kaplan, Julie Hand, Larry Bush, Drew Lamb, Richard Maizell, Lou Cherry, Neal Maker

Absent: Grant Orenstein

Guests: Jim Barlow, Town of Calais Attorney; Eric Sorenson, Calais Resident; Doug Bullett, part-time Calais resident

Stephanie called meeting to order at 7: 10 p.m.

1. Agenda revisions or additions:

Stephanie made motion to amend agenda, Julie seconded, all in favor with following amendments to agenda:

- a. Neal – Potential new public trail
- b. Stephanie – VT Community Forest opportunity
- c. Stephanie – Plan for Town Meeting presentation

2. Approve December Minutes:

Larry made motion to amend minutes; discussion followed. Larry made motion to accept minutes as amended, Drew seconded, Neal abstained. All in favor with the following amendment:

- a. Clarified language regarding putting plan together for town meeting.

3. Conservation Fund Balance: \$80,120.51

4. Attorney Jim Barlow:

Jim represents the Town of Calais and offered to attend this meeting to introduce himself, and provide a refresher on Open Meeting Law. He has an agreement with the Selectboard for a set number of hours quarterly. If anyone has questions for Jim, they should run it by Stephanie who will contact Denise Wheeler to seek permission to call him.

Jim clarified the following:

a. 3 types of meetings

- i. Regular meeting – agenda must be posted 48 hours prior to meeting, posted at the town office and 2 other public places. The Selectboard has designated the Maple Corner and East Calais stores, the Town Office, Town website, and Front Porch Forum.

- ii. Special – must provide 24 hours notice and agenda, posted at the town office and two other public places, plus must notify newspaper or radio station. Calais uses the Hardwick Gazette for this purpose.
 - iii. Emergency – unforeseen occurrence or condition requiring immediate attention. There are no specific posting or agenda requirements.
- b. Minutes**
- i. Must be recorded for each meeting
 - ii. Draft must be available within 5 days to the public by posting on town website. Can substitute the final minutes after they're approved.
- c. Public Meeting**
- i. A public meeting is any gathering of a quorum (majority) of the Commission for the purpose of discussing town business or taking action. A public meeting can be via email, or in person, or electronic format.
 - ii. Can send emails only to schedule a meeting, set agendas, or distribute information. Cannot have discussion via email if it's among a quorum. Good rule of thumb is not to click "reply all." Emails may be sent to individuals or less than a quorum.

Jim closed by recommending we read the Open Meeting Law FAQ section of the VLCT website which provides all the above information and more.

5. Review Draft Report for Town Report:

Draft was reviewed, discussed and minor edits made.

Next Steps: Stephanie will edit and finalize the draft and send it to Donna by January 12.

6. Bliss Pond Town Forest:

Eric Sorenson, an ecologist, attended meeting and provided his professional and personal opinion on preserving and creating old growth forests. Eric discussed what is happening around the state, and referenced a matrix the state has identifying old growth forests. Larry produced a document with facts, data, and information that largely supports his devotion to preserving the Bliss Pond Town Forest in its natural state going forward. Larry also spoke of the VT Family Forest Association and their initiative. Neal added his opinion that managing forests is important and the Bliss Pond Town Forest could be managed to provide an example of a well-managed forest. Much discussion occurred and after a while Stephanie suggested we table for now and add to future agenda.

7. Public Trail, Access Town Forest:

Neal gave heads up about trails meeting scheduled for Saturday, January 7, 2016. David and Kathy Morse would like to discuss a potential trail across their land that could go from Maple Corner to the Bliss Pond Town Forest.

8. VT Community Forest Opportunity:

Stephanie conveyed her conversation with Elise Schadler of the Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program about an opportunity to be one of nine towns able to get a wide range of assistance, education, funds and support from the Forestry Program, at no cost to the town. It was agreed we should pursue the opportunity. Stephanie will discuss with the Selectboard and provide more information at next meeting. Stephanie gave a heads up about

two conferences concerning trees: a Town Forest Recreation Planning Summit will be held in Bethel on January 24, 2017. It is free but those wanting to attend need to register. Then on May 4, the annual Arbor Day celebration will take place in Montpelier at Vermont College. There will be a number of interesting workshops. Neal will keep the Commission informed about it.

8. Town Meeting Presentation

The Commission discussed developing a presentation for Town Meeting to support our request for \$8,000 for the Conservation Fund this year. This will include a list of all the projects that have been funded with Conservation Fund money over the years, with a description and identification on a map. Julie and Larry will work on putting it together, with help from Neal who will prepare the maps.

9. Real estate matter: Executive Session

At 9:15 Drew moved and Larry seconded to go into Executive Session to discuss a potential real estate matter, inviting Doug Bullett to join them. At 9:40 the members came out of Executive Session. No decisions were made.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45. Next meeting is scheduled for February 1, 2017

Minutes respectfully submitted by,

Candi Smith

Conservation Commission Recording Secretary