

DRAFT

**Calais Conservation Commission Minutes
Calais Town Office**

Meeting Date: 3/2/16

Meeting convened at 7:00 PM

Present: Mat Barewicz, Stephanie Kaplan, Julie Hand, Richard Maizell (recorder), Neil Neal Maker, Drew Lamb

Guests: Eric Sorenson, Matt Peters, John McCullough, Doug and Brent Lilley

Armstrong Farm Update:

Doug and Brent Lilley, local farmers with an interest in the Armstrong Farm, attended the meeting. Stephanie shared its current status. The property owner has indicated that the Lilleys will be afforded the opportunity to purchase the property first. If that should not happen she will work with the Land Trust. The Lilleys are investigating a purchase but have not made a decision to go forward. The property owner wishes/needs to sell soon. An appraisal has been completed by an appraiser hired by the Land Trust in the amount of \$350,000. Essentially everything is on hold until private interests are resolved. The Lilleys indicated that they would not accept any conservation restrictions along the Pekin Brook or anywhere else on the property. Stephanie opined that the acquisition project is on hold until the Lilleys have decided if they want to buy the farm at a price agreeable to the property owner.

Minutes: Neal moved to approve the minutes from the February meeting as written, seconded by Stephanie. Minutes were approved.

Conservation Fund balance: \$78,693.63 as of 12/30/2015

Proposed Shoreland Zoning revisions Update:

Stephanie explained that at the Selectboard hearing on the proposed Shoreland zoning there were two primary concerns:

- Reducing the existing depth of the Shoreland District from 800 feet to 250 feet to match the new state more minimalist requirements
- Shoreland district ends at the public road. This is particularly an issue within designated villages where the density is higher, potentiating more significant impact on water quality

The Selectboard decided not to approve changes to the Shoreland zoning at the recent hearing. They will continue their review and the final revisions can be brought to the town for a vote during the primary election in August 2016.

Stephanie clarified that the Commission is the expert on natural resources and it is our role to protect the natural resources in town including the surface waters. She suggested to the CC that this would be a good opportunity for the CC and the Lakes & Streams Committee to review the regulations to determine if there are ways to better protect the ponds and streams. A discussion ensued as to roles and responsibilities concerning the Planning Board and the Conservation Commission related to environmental regulations. John McCullough said that there will be new zoning regulations specific to Curtis Pond due to the degradation of water quality. He indicated that existing camps are causing the problem unrelated to new construction. He invited the Conservation Commission to be part of that process. He indicated that standards would be established to receive written comments with much more detailed agendas provided.

Phase Two of NRI:

At Town Meeting the article seeking \$7500 for Phase 2 of the NRI was approved. But that is not sufficient funds to cover the costs of a more complete inventory that would allow Matt to continue his work identifying significant wetlands and natural community types. There was a discussion of potential funding sources to cover the additional costs. Matt Peters shared a list of goals that could be completed on the Inventory and asked for direction as to how to proceed. Ideas were shared as to how to pare down some of the goals to stay within budget while also addressing the goals of the newly adopted Town Plan. It was suggested that the Commission, working with landowners or community volunteers employing guidelines provided by Matt, could do some of the fieldwork. Identifying vernal pools and road crossings were provided as examples. Further discussion ensued as to whether to proceed with the full Phase II and work concurrently on additional funding or to proceed with a reduced budget. Both Matt and Eric Sorenson, our resident ecologist, strongly expressed the need to find additional funding for Phase 2, expressing concern that it would be difficult for Matt to divide his Phase 2 work into several pieces without knowing how far or deep he could go. Matt is going to put in writing what he would like to do that would take additional funds, and what would have to be left out without the funding. Then the Selectboard will be contacted to discuss alternate funding sources.

Other Business:

\$4000 in additional funds was approved for the Town's Conservation Fund at town meeting. A discussion of the statutory authority for the Conservation Fund and the Town's guidelines ensued, with suggestions to review them both to determine whether the guidelines need to be revised to be more consistent with the statute, and to what extent spending for items other than land conservation would be appropriate.

Next Conservation Commission Meeting: Wednesday, April 6, 2016