

Calais Conservation Commission Minutes

7/7/2016 - Calais Town Office

Present: Larry Bush, Lou Cherry, Julie Hand, Stephanie Kaplan, Drew Lamb, Richard Maize11 (recorder), Neal Maker, Grant Ornstein

Guests: Renee Carpenter, Ginger Clammer, Cathy Kashanski, Heidi Thompson, Denise Wheeler

Proceedings:

Meeting called to order at 7:00 PM

Beavers on Curtis Pond:

Members of the public attended to discuss the impact of beavers on Curtis Pond. The agenda was revised to allow the public to discuss the beaver issue at the beginning of the meeting. Stephanie made the point that there are enough people on Curtis Pond as well as interested members of the community to keep the dam clear of sticks while a longer term resolution of the problem can be found. The discussion broadened to include the high hazard dam status of the pond and the potential for a breach.

Heidi Thompson advocated for a larger community involvement in dealing with the pond, making the point that it is a community resource so perhaps the town should be involved. Denise Wheeler indicated that the town does not own the dam and cannot take responsibility for all the ponds in Calais.

Grant asked why a beaver baffle would not work. Stephanie indicated her understanding was that anything like a baffle or a fence that would put more pressure on the dam could potentially make matters worse in terms of dam failure. Grant expressed concern that all of the possibilities for addressing the beaver issue have not been considered.

Larry indicated that the email from the Fish and Wildlife employee provided suggestions for resolving beaver/human issues, also reiterating that a fence would not resolve the problem.

Richard volunteered to investigate how the NJ live trap program works to move beaver to different habitats.

Stephanie indicated that more research needed to be done but in the interim and she asked if anyone was willing to set up a schedule for keeping the dam clear of the beavers' sticks and other debris. She indicated that trapping and killing them was not something she would personally support. She asked if anyone knew what the beaver population currently is in the pond. Nobody knew.

Stephanie wondered whether the town should reconsider making repairs to the dam. A discussion ensued as to liability if the dam should give way.

Larry brought back the conversation to clearing the dam, pointing out that in his experience it took only a few minutes to clear it, although the accumulated branches need to be moved somewhere.

Stephanie suggested a meeting at the dam to learn how to clear debris and set up a schedule of volunteers. Renee suggested that picking a date and getting the word out for a dam meeting would not be a burdensome task. It was suggested that a meeting occur on 7/13/16 at 6:30 PM. Ginger indicated she would publicize the meeting.

Armstrong Property:

Stephanie reported that Jon Ramsey sent a 23-page draft easement document concerning the property. Stephanie indicated she had read the document and was prepared to go through it and discuss her concerns and anybody else's. Neal noted that the Schedules addressing farm labor housing were missing. Stephanie and Cathy both expressed concern about the amount of discretion invested in the easement holders. Neal indicated that his experience with these types of agreements was that a similar level of discretion was provided to the grantors.

Renee Carpenter indicated she would like to see approximately 5 acres left out of the easement that could be available in the future for affordable housing for people who work on the land. She said there is a need for people who work in this area to have affordable housing on the land they are farming rather than having to commute to their work. Stephanie and Drew asked what Jon Ramsey's view of the proposal was. Renee said they had had some conversations and she would be talking with him again. Cathy Kashanski spoke to the larger concept of preserving the farm as desired by the current owner. She felt that the cluster housing idea would be a hard sell to the surrounding community and the town. Ultimately it was noted that the decision to include this proposal will be up to Jon Ramsey and if it were inserted in the application then the Conservation Commission would need to review this new element of the plan.

Stephanie spoke about the historic house on the property referencing Page 9 of the easement. She pointed out that altering the house would be at the discretion of the grantee and wondered if an interest in historic preservation could be considered one of the criteria when selecting a farmer.

Stephanie indicated that there is no distinction between organic and pesticide use in the easement. There was a discussion about whether that was something that could be included even though we understand that the policy of the Land Trust is not to tell the farmers how to farm. The suggestion was made that perhaps a preference for a farmer who uses organic practices could be part of the farmer interview process.

Other questions about the easement were briefly raised but as the hour was getting late it was agreed that members of the Commission would send their questions and comments to Stephanie and she would compile them for a discussion with Jon Ramsay at a future meeting.

Other business:

A brief discussion ensued regarding the status of adoption of new Shoreland rules and regulations.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for August 3rd at 7:00 pm at the town office.

Meeting adjourned at 9:40 PM