

**TOWN OF CHESTERFIELD  
CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES  
FEBRUARY 15, 2012**

Present: Kathy Thatcher, Chairman; Tom Duston, Lynne Borofsky, Amy LaFontaine and Steve Hardy (arrived at 7:40 PM).

Absent: David Wood and Jeff Newcomer

Kathy Thatcher called the meeting to order at 7:35 PM. She turned the meeting over to Tom Duston for the Public Hearing.

1). Public Hearing - Tom asked everyone to keep comments focused on the use of the \$100,000 out of the Conservation Fund for the purchase of an easement on the Colony Property. He introduced Rocci Aguirre from the Monadnock Conservancy. Rocci gave an overview of the project. The proposed easement is for 300 acres on the Town Line. It is an important piece connecting Keene to Pisgah. 90% of the property is considered Tier 1 for highest conservation value primarily due to a heron rookery. There is 8,000 feet on a stream that is considered Tier 2 wetlands. The easement is valued at \$284,000. The remaining funds are coming from LCHIP, DES and the Quabbin to Cardigan Partnership. The primary uses of the property are for Timber Management, Pedestrian, Outdoor Recreation and education uses.

A Public Hearing is required to expend \$100,000 from the Fund. Final Approval is required from the Selectboard. Rebecca Todd thanked the Commission for their efforts, dedication, energy and foresight. She fully supports the project. John Caveney asked about the buffers and wanted to review the actual easement document. DES is requiring a 100 foot buffer around the pond and along California Brook and 250 feet around the cove on the west central side of the pond where the heron reside. The stream is not a protected stream. Ruth Van Houten was not in favor of the project because of the amount of timber that would need to be harvested to earn back the \$100,000. Tom stated that the reason for purchasing the easement is not to earn back timber revenue. Tax revenue is currently very low because the property is in current use. Charlie Donahue spoke against the project as the Town is 1/3 protected already. He did not feel that this was the time to expend these funds. Frank Richter stated that the Conservation Fund had been accumulating over strong economies and recessions. He is in favor of the project. Ron Rzasa stated that this project was an excellent investment. Val Starbuck stated that she had come from Nashua and loves Chesterfield for the rural character. She asked for a show of hands in favor of the project. The majority were in favor. Richard Aldrich stated that he thought this was such a good presentation that he would put his own farm in Conservation.

John Caveney spoke out about locked gates. The gates are actually not on this project. John wants access regardless of age and physical abilities. Tom stated that the Commission would be willing to work with Selectboard to provide access to this location. Ruth stated that 25% of the Town is already protected not including the River. She did not support the project. Tom stated that the Master Plan charges the Conservation

Commission with maintaining the balance of Open Space. There are currently 3 subdivisions and development projects approved or in process before the Planning Board. This project is merely maintaining the balance of open space.

Tom Woodman stated that the property could be 4 housing lots with 2 children each in the school at a cost of \$13,000 per year per child. The property is currently rural agricultural zoning with 400 feet of frontage. The property is currently on a Class A trail. Tom asked the Commission to focus on properties that have more development potential in the Center of Town. He stated that the Commission should be asking for \$50,000 per year to purchase more valuable land in the Center of Town. Steve Hardy spoke against the project. He stated that this property is already highly protected by the wetlands, streams, and required buffers and being on a Class A trail. There are 6,000 acres of Pisgah in Chesterfield. Tom stated that the Commission had offered \$100,000 for a property on Route 63. The \$100,000 did not come close to protecting the land. Bob Borosky spoke in favor of the project. He stated that the 3 developments are proposed because of the desirability and character of Chesterfield. He stated that the money will come back in ways not recognized. Rocci stated that he believes the acreage excluded from development with the buffers is only 8 – 10 acres. This opportunity has taken 2 years to negotiate. Ryan Owens from the Monadnock Conservancy spoke to the potential long term investment. Forecastle Timber purchased the logging rights on the property. This will be a working landscape.

Craig Hood stated that the gates were necessary as there was a lack of respect for the land beyond the gates. The Commission was given the right of expenditure from the Fund in the '90's. John Caveney stated that an amendment in 2008 requires a vote on Conservation to go to Town Meeting. Tom stated that the amendment was not adopted by Chesterfield because the Town Ordinance is more restrictive. Tom asked John to call the LGC because their explanation will be more scientific than Tom can describe. Ann Stokes spoke in favor of the Project. Ryan Owens spoke that buyer and seller signed a purchase & sales agreement in December. There are 3 bodies with executory interest in this project: the State, LCHIP and the Town. The executory interests have enforcement rights if the Monadnock Conservancy fails to keep its end of the bargain. Burt Riendeau asked about the likelihood of a Class A trail being converted back to a Town Road? Tom stated that all that would be required would be a vote at Town Meeting. The Governing Body of the Town could change a lot in 20 years. Steve Hardy spoke to draining the fund and wanted to save the funds to purchase the Hubner's Mitchell's and Chickerings.

Rocci stated that this is critical dialogue. He is working on another easement for \$250,000 that is only 65 acres. Land protection of this type takes partnerships working together. The group agreed that if zoning ordinances can be created or improved to help farmers be more profitable so they don't need to sell their land for development. The Selectboard wants to review the actual easement documents as well. The full appraisal of the property is \$500,000. The Public Hearing ended at 8:50 PM

- 2). Tom moved to approve January 25<sup>th</sup> minutes as amended. The motion was seconded by Lynne and passed unanimously.
- 3). Permits, Complaints – Kathy stated that John Daley had been accepted as complete.

4). Tools – Tom stated that he has the cordless drill

5). Land Development - Tom moved for final approval to expend \$100,000 from the Conservation Fund to contribute toward the purchase of a Conservation Easement on the roughly 300 acre Colony Pond Project. The easement will be held by the Monadnock Conservancy with the Town of Chesterfield holding an executory interest. This expenditure is subject to the final approval of the Selectboard. The motion was seconded by Lynne. Amy stated that the original motion had been voted on by the Commission on March 3, 2010. The motion passed by majority vote.

6). Tom reported that there had been a problem at the Friedsam parking lot on Route 63 due to human waste. It was proposed that the trail head could be closed. The picnic table could be moved. No one was aware of anyone ever using the table. It is a dark area. Tom reported that the sign about human waste could bring comments to the Selectboard.

7). The Commission will discuss at the next meeting night whether another meeting night would be better that does not conflict with the Selectboard. The next meeting will be March 28<sup>th</sup>. Steve will be the Chair. Tom will not be present. He does not object to Monday meeting nights. Steve moved to adjourn at 9:18 PM. The motion was seconded by Kathy and passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amy LaFontaine  
Secretary

Approved:

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Kathy Thatcher

Date:\_\_\_\_\_