

# Minutes of 26 February 2020 Alexandria Conservation Commission Meeting

*This is considered a draft copy until accepted by the Conservation Commission at its next scheduled meeting*

**Call meeting to order** at 18:33 by Ernest Lamos

**Members Present:** Ernie Lamos, Kim Sharp, Merry Ruggirello, George Whittaker, Steve Whitman,, Ron Maclean, Jennifer Tuthill, Deb Donohue, and Dilys Morris

**Excused:** none

**Absent:** none

**BOS representative present:** Bob Piehler

Guests attending the meeting: Rosi Homer and Audrey West

**Approve minutes from 29 January 2020 mtg:** minutes from the January mtg. were not available

**Financials:** 2020 Operating budget of \$1601 pending approval at town election 10 March 2020. No new conversion of land from current use or pending payments due. Current balance of Conservation Trust not available for mtg.

**Permits:** none

Ernie welcomed the newly appointed members to the commission; Jennifer Tuthill, Ron Maclean, Dilys Morris, and Deb Donohue. There was a brief discussion about the role of Alternates.

Old Business

1. Status of benches honoring Kate Barrett and Janet Towse in Barrett Park – Kim Sharp  
Kim reported that he had the material but was not planning on doing anything until spring.

2. Status of game cameras to monitor Barrett Park – Ron Maclean  
A motion was made by Jennifer Tuthill and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Merry Ruggirello to authorize Ron to purchase 1 game camera for placement at Barrett Park for the purpose of monitoring trash dumping and vandalism at a cost of \$39.99. The motion was passed unanimously. Ron will purchase the camera, which will be placed when weather permits.

3. Coordination of efforts with Newfound lake Regional Association; conservation crews for summer projects – Ernie Lamos

Nothing further has been done to date as this involves assistance from NRLA involving summertime projects. As the commission has not yet identified or prioritized any 2020 projects, no interaction has taken place; however, the fact that resources may be available will no doubt influence the types of projects and their scope.

4. Clean-Up days for 2020 – Ernie Lamos

It was decided that road clean-up would take place on the 1<sup>st</sup> weekend of each month, weather permitting. Interested volunteers should meet at the Municipal Bldg. at 10:00 and plan to work for

2 hrs. At least 1 “pick-up” vehicle will be needed in addition to pickers. Volunteers are reminded to dress accordingly including gloves and a safety vest if you have one.

5. Protecting town owned property(s) for conservation purposes – Bob Piehler/Steve Whitman  
The Board of Selectmen are aware of our vulnerability as things currently stand. Jennifer Tuthill researched this 3 yrs. ago and will review correspondence from her earlier efforts. Depending on what she finds, we will move forward.

During the discussion it was suggested that a warrant article could be drafted to require that any land owned by the town would need to be evaluated by the conservation commission to determine conservation interests/concerns before it could be put up for auction (suggested wording is contained in the Handbook for Conservation Commissions). A motion was made by Jennifer Tuthill and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Steve Whitman that a warrant article be drafted for the 2021 town election. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Status of nominations for 2020 officers and review of Bylaws – Steve Whitman/Ernie Lamos  
Steve passed out an updated list of current commission member and when their current term expired. It is suggested that terms be set-up so that approximately 1/3 of the members’ terms expire each year – this preserves continuity. Our current terms are set-up 3 – 3 – 1. This is working but should be changed so that we have 2 – 2 – 3, which can be done as vacancies occur. At our April mtg., we are required to review our Bylaws and elect officers for the coming year (Chairperson, and Secretary, with the option of a Vice Chairperson). It has been our practice to develop the slate of officers and discuss any changes to the Bylaws at our March mtg. and vote on the slate and Bylaw changes, if any, at the April mtg.

Merry made the observation that Bylaws should be flexible enough so as not to require constant changing, the group agreed and will review the Bylaws with that in mind. Bylaws were last revised in 2017 to add provisions for a Junior Membership category and some minor clarifications.

## New Business

1. Status of Website development by Peter Donohue – Steve Whitman

Peter Donohue update the commission on the status of the website development project. Peter is acting in an advisory capacity to help develop our website. There were some technical issues which prevented Peter from accessing the system since our initial meeting on 17 February, which were overcome 26 February. A copy of the agenda and minutes of the mtg. held on 17 February are attached.

Development of the site will continue and once the format and working mechanics have been developed, a demo of the system will be given to the commission for their comments/suggestions and approval. At this time, there is no projected for a date by which the new site will be ready for demo.

2. Members commitment to using electronic communications and what can be discussed – Steve Whitman

Steve indicated that there was a need for commission members to commit to accessing their computer daily to receive communications. This is not only the fastest way to communicate, as you can send 1 message to everyone vs. communicating individually, plus it provides a written record. Several members voiced the opinion that it was not convenient to access their email daily, and they would rather be contacted via the telephone. There was considerable discussion ending with Jennifer summing it up by saying that everyone had to make a sincere commitment to try to access their email daily and recognize that this was part of being a member of the commission. All agreed to try to comply.

Steve discussed briefly that the “right to Know” laws impacting public bodies require that emails cannot be used to conduct “Official Business” as that could be construed as a “meeting” and subject to all applicable meeting requirements. They can be used very effectively for simple communications and should be; just remember that no commission decisions can be made via email, nor can discussions resulting in a decision about a specific piece of business before the commission be discussed – should that happen, those emails become part of the minutes.

As a byproduct of this discussion, Steve agreed to develop a directory of members listing name, address, email address, telephone #s (land line and mobile) and term expiration date. This list would also indicate the individual’s preference as to how they wished to be contacted. Each commission member was asked to provide this information to Steve.

3. Any other business that may be presented by the commission or attendees.

**Rosi Homer** raised the issue of trapping beavers in the bog and specifically within the Barrett Park area. She indicated that she felt it was inappropriate to create a situation where people coming to enjoy the beauty of the bog and Barrett Park be confronted with a dead beaver snared in a trap. Bob addressed the issue indicating that trapping permits had to come through the Select Board who designated the specific areas where trapping was allowed. He assured her that trapping within the Barrett Park area would be restricted and out of public view if required. He pointed out that beaver will follow their food source. The commission will monitor the area within the park area and advise the Select Board if trappers are not complying with the restrictions.

**Jennifer Tuthill** reported on her findings regarding the need for a licensed forester to draw up a forest management plan for the Town Forest or land in “current use” status. Additionally, she researched requirements regarding the application of herbicides and pesticides. Regarding the requirement for a licensed forester to create a forestry management plan, after talking with the County Forester, Jim Frohn, it was determined that we can write our own plan that reflects the current situation in the Town Forest. However, the individual we hire does have to have insurance, follow state regulations and requirements, and practice up to date forestry. For land in “current use” you need a current forestry report which can draft yourself.

Herbicides and pesticides applications must be supervised by a licensed applicator who is a long-term member of the Conservation Commission and is a “Comm. Not for Hire level “B”. This would be an issue for us when dealing with invasive species. There are additional restrictions governing the use of these types of materials in proximity to wetlands and waterways.

**Jennifer Tuthill** informed the group about a newly formed group of concerned residents who are concerned about climate change and global warming. She indicated that the group felt that recycling played an important part in contributing to the control of the pollution linked to the cause of climate change, linking recycling as something with which the conservation commission should be and is concerned. Our transfer station does not have the space necessary to expand at its current location to take advantage of many recycling opportunities. The town has an opportunity to purchase 17 acres of property which, among other advantages to the town, would provide the opportunity to relocate our transfer station and expand our recycling operation. To promote the purchase of this land by the town, Jennifer Tuthill made a motion, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Merry Ruggirello that the commission authorize the purchase of 10 signs promoting the purchasing of the land which will be voted on 10 March 2020. The motion passed unanimously.

**Kim Sharp** presented the commission with a copy of a ebook entitled Hiking Trails in Alexandria. The booklet maps out the numerous trails on the 700 acres owned by the Butman family in Alexandria and narratives. This booklet can be downloaded onto an Amazon Kindle or your iPhone free of charge by accessing [www.blurb.com/ebooks/711414-alexandria-hiking-guide-2019](http://www.blurb.com/ebooks/711414-alexandria-hiking-guide-2019), or interested persons can **BORROW** a copy from the Conservation Commission Library at the Municipal Bldg. We are also trying to build a link directly from our new webpage. If you don't have a Blurb account, you may need to set one up; however, the download is free, and no credit card information is required.

There being no other business brought before the commission, the meeting was adjourned at 20:15.

Our next scheduled meeting will be: 25 March 2020

Respectfully Submitted

Steve Whitman, Acting Secretary

Attachment: Agenda and minutes of 17 February 2020 mtg. Website Development

## Attachment to 26 Feb 2020 ACC Mtg.

ACC Special Mtg. w/Jennifer D., Peter D., Earnie L. and Steve W. held 09:00 at the town Municipal Bldg., 2/17/2020

Purpose: To discuss the creation a a new Conservation Commission Webpage accessed via the town website.

Background: The Conservation Commission currently has both a webpage and a Facebook account. The Facebook account is basically maintained by Jennifer Tuthill and the webpage by Steve Whitman with input assistance from Jennifer D.. The webpage has not been updated in almost a year. A proposed format was presented to the commission for review and input, almost a year ago, but nothing was done, as the commission failed to provide feedback on layout or furnish any material for inclusion. The commission use to publish a monthly newsletter article which was published in the town newsletter; however, this was discontinued almost 2 years ago and nothing took its place. The commission really has nothing it uses to communicate with the public on a regular basis, and it is felt that we need to rectify this issue.

This meeting is to address the webpage issue.

Issues:

- Jennifer D. cannot be expected to maintain the ACC webpage; it is the responsibility of the ACC.
- There is a security issue in that administrative access may not be able to be limited to specific pages only.
- The current proposed webpage design uses hyperlinks from the ACC home page, which is accessed from the town's home webpage. The feeling at the moment is that this should continue to be accessed in this manner, as the conservation commission is part of the town.
- The use of hyperlinks requires someone to periodically police these links to be sure they are still active and relevant. This is especially true of hyperlinks connecting to outside websites.
- Internally generated articles are currently housed in a locally controled library which is linked to the webpage. However, this also needs to be monitored to delete items which are date sensitive, obsolete because of new information, or for any number of other reasons. This takes time and should be the responsibility of the ACC, not Jennifer – problem here is that to delete or amend you need administrative authority, and unless that authority can be limited to specific areas, there is the security issue.

Objectives:

1. First off, we need to resolve the security issue. Ideally, we will be able to find a way to limit administrative authority to specific webpages.
2. Second, we need to see if it makes sense to continue accessing via the town website. Generally, it is probably more effective cost wise not to create a new website when we already have one. The issue that needs to be resolved, is what can our current website do without have to upgrade it.
3. Lastly, we need to establish ground rules and responsibilities. After working through the various issues, we may come to the decision that it doesn't make sense to do anything more that create a home webpage for the ACC on the town website directing them to our Facebook page, and make that our major means of communications with the community.

### **Minutes of Meeting**

Meeting called to order by Steve Whitman at 09:13

In attendance were: Peter Donohue, Jennifer Dostie and Steve Whitman. Also joining the mtg. at 09:45 were Jennifer Tuthill and Ernest Lamos. There was no quorum from the ACC present, so official minutes for ACC purposes were not required.

Meeting agenda as outlined in email notification to attendees was followed (above).

Objectives:

1. The security issue was resolved in that our website provider can provide administrative authority changes; however, these changes cannot be actually published until released by Jennifer D. This was deemed acceptable to all parties.

Peter also has some additional questions about monitoring capabilities of the web provider which will allow us to evaluate our webpage. Peter will "play with the system" to see what capabilities are available – Jennifer has given him the password to allow this.

A demo with the web provider is being arranged for us to view the system and ask additional questions – time and place to be determined.

Peter will present a recap and project status at the 26 Feb. Mtg. of the ACC.

2. It was decided that the most logical place from which to access the Conservation Commission webpage was from the town website as generally people would be on the town site. There was further discussion about creating a link from the Commission's facebook page to the webpage, which seems to make sense. This appears to be a relatively simple process and has no impact on the development of the Commission's webpage. Details will be worked out with Jennifer Tuthill as she basically controls our facebook page.

3. It was decided that it made sense to continue development of a webpage interactive with our facebook page, as each served a unique purpose; one for communication and discussion and one for information. For example, the web page may contain information about the Town Forest and its history, while the facebook page may contain an account of a hike in the town forest taken by a resident highlighting specific of their adventure or a comment or picture taken.

Meeting adjourned at 10:20