

Town of Pelham, NH
Pelham Conservation Commission
6 Village Green
Pelham, NH 03076-3723

MEETING OF 12/21/09

APPROVED 01/13/10

Members Present:

Glennie Edwards, Karen Mackay,
Lisa Loosigian, Paul Dadak,
Chris McCarron

Absent:

Paul Gagnon

Co-Chairman Paul Dadak brought the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Map 26 Lot 2-66 & 2-76 and Map 27 Lot 2-77 Public hearing regarding a proposal to purchase 69, 72 & 75 Spaulding Hill Road for use as conservation land.

Presentation by Karen Mackay

The parcels are located south of Gumpas Pond Conservation Area (GPCA) and west of New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF) land. The parcels would provide a connection between these properties. The land is about 90% uplands with above average quality of wood. A 2 acre wetland is on the northern portion of the property. The wetland drains into a stream that enters Gumpas Pond. Stone walls cross the property randomly. Gumpas Hill Road and Spaulding Hill Road border the property to the north and east. Spaulding Hill Road is eroded from water which has seeped from the land.

Ms. Spalding, the landowner, was contacted in February to inquire about the possibility of the parcels being protected as conservation land. Ms. Spalding was interested in conservation of her land and agreed to meet with us and walk the property. Mr. Gagnon and Ms. Mackay walked the property with Ms. Spalding in May. The Board of Selectmen approved the expenditure of funds to have the property appraised. Kevin McManus, of McManus & Nault Appraisal Company, Inc., conducted the appraisal in July. Mr. McManus estimated the value of the property to be \$70,000. The town had posted their appraised value of the parcels to be \$78,200 when the town website was checked in July. Since that time, the value of the property posted on the town site has dropped to \$59,500. Negotiations had already begun before the posted drop in value.

The property is located on an unimproved (Class VI) section of Gumpas Hill Road and Spaulding Hill Road. The lack of maintained road frontage and the distance needed to upgrade the road are the major reasons for the low appraised value of the property. In order to develop the property, a substantial distance of road must be upgraded on Gumpas Hill Road, Spaulding Hill Road and/or Gowing Road in Hudson. Access from Gumpas Hill Road could be achieved with road upgrades of 4,500 feet. Spaulding Hill Road access would require 2,800 feet of upgrade and Gowing Road in Hudson would require 1,900 feet of upgrade. The shortest reasonable distance

of improvement to the road would be from Spaulding Hill Road given that Planning does not usually approve developments with access through another town.

The cost to improve these distances of road, at this time, makes the possibility of development of the parcel prohibitive. A developer could not sell the lots for a reasonable profit given the amount of money needed to offset the cost of the road. The appraiser determined the highest and best use of this property to be for passive recreation and timber management.

The Conservation Commission has been discussing this property since February or March. The location is ideal. The parcels would connect the GPCA to NEFF land. In addition, to the west of GPCA is 100 acres of NEFF land, 56 acres in Pelham and 44 acres in Hudson. To the east of the parcels adjacent to NEFF land is the Fisher easement of about 20 acres. This one property would connect all this land for a total of about 270 acres. This property is one step in a Commission goal to possibly connect GPCA to Merriam/Cutter Conservation Area.

One of the goals of the Conservation Commission is to retire house lots. Although these parcels are not under development pressure presently, they could be in the future. As the town becomes more developed, there will be more pressure to develop this land. Lots in the western part of town may be developed which may mean less distance of road will need to be improved to reach these parcels. At some point, development of the parcels could become profitable. Mr. Gagnon estimates about 12 house lots could be developed on this land.

The town has signed a purchase and sale agreement with the landowner for \$78,200 which was the posted town's appraisal value in July. The appraisal from McManus & Nault came in much lower than expected at \$70,000. Originally, the landowner wanted \$150,000. Mr. Gagnon explained the town would not pay more than twice the appraised value. Eventually, the price of \$78,200 was agreed upon. This property is not a bargain sale. We will be paying more than the appraised value. The cost per acre is substantially less than we have paid in the past, except for donated land. The cost per acre will be \$2,500. The least we have paid per acre has been \$5,000 for Gumpas Pond Conservation Area and the most is \$11,400 for Ivers.

The Commission fills out a checklist for open space acquisitions for each property we are considering purchasing. The property must meet certain criteria to be considered for purchase. This property meets all the necessary criteria and has no issues that would disqualify it from consideration. Positive points regarding the property include, protecting rural character and natural resources, meets goals in the Master Plan, property owner is interested in conservation, protects water resources, connects land, can be used for recreation and education, wildlife habitat, timber management and reduces housing units.

This Commission began talking about taking a proactive approach to land conservation last year around this time. We decided we would approach landowners and see if they were interested in conservation. This is the first property, in our proactive approach that we have made plans to acquire. Ms. Spalding has agreed to sell us this property with the understanding that the land will be used for conservation purposes.

By law, we must give 10 days notice of a public hearing. Notice for this public hearing was given on December 10, 2009. The notice was published in the Lowell Sun. In addition, the notice was posted at the library, the post office and the town hall.

Public Input:
None

Motion: (Loosigian/Edwards) to recommend the purchase of the Spalding property, as presented, to the BOS.

Vote: 5-0 in favor

The landowner would like to close on the property this year. A BOS public hearing will be held on December 29, 2009. The BOS hearing will be the last opportunity for the public to comment on this purchase.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion: (Mackay/McCarron) to adjourn

Vote: 5-0

Meeting adjourned at 6:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Mackay,
Recording Secretary