

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

MEETING OF 05/11/22

Members Present:

Karen Mackay, Al Steward
Mike Gendreau, Ken Stanvick,
Scott Bowden (alt)

APPROVED 06/08/22

Members Absent:

Paul Gagnon, Lisa Loosigian
Kara Kubit (alt)

Al Steward brought the meeting to order at 7:09. He led Commission members in the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Steward reminded town residents that the new Master Plan is underway and input is wanted from all residents. Surveys will be sent to residents which will allow them to participate in the Master Plan rewrite process. Mr. Steward appointed Scott Bowden as a voting member for tonight.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Map 29 Lot 7-121	122 A & B Old Bridge Street – Proposal to purchase approximately 9.8 acres for use as conservation land/public park – Presentation by Al Steward.
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This parcel was up for sale last year. Mr. Dennis Hogan, a former member of the Commission, was in talks with the land owner about the town acquiring this lot or acquiring an easement on this lot. No deal could be reached at that time, then Mr. Hogan resigned from the Commission because he moved out of town. The owner took the property off the market in fall 2021. Mr. Hogan handed the project off to Mr. Steward. The owner, broker, Selectmen and Mr. Steward were trying to make a deal in late winter 2022 to purchase the property. No deal was reached and the property went back on the market April 1, 2022.

The town will be installing a bypass bridge north of the Abbott Bridge on Old Bridge Street in the next few years. The new bridge is needed because the Abbott Bridge does not have the capacity to move water through in very large storms or at high water times. The new bridge allows more water to flow so as to minimize flooding caused by backups. The new bridge will have an overflow spillway that is higher than the general high water mark of Beaver Brook. The water will normally flow in the channel of Beaver Brook. If there is too much water, then the water will flow over the spillway and flow around Abbott Bridge. The new bridge construction will require a portion of lot 29/7-121 for grading and construction.

This property is interesting to the Commission because of its location. Members have been thinking of making a 3 mile loop trail that would include this lot. The trail head parking would

be on the lot as would picnic areas and a boat launch. The trail would be called the Bill McDevitt Nature Trail and would start on the property and run along Beaver Brook through the School District lots and come out on Willow Street. A sidewalk would run down Willow Street toward the corner of Willow and Marsh. A new sidewalk has already been built along Marsh Road. The sidewalk would continue down Old Bridge Street to the subject parcel. This trail would be relatively level and may be good for senior citizens and possibly have wheel chair access in the future. This is a proposed 5+ year project of which this parcel is a keystone piece.

The Selectmen are interested in the lot because of the new bridge. Some land will need to be taken for the bridge. This process would be easier if the town owned the property. If the town does not own the property, there will need to be discussions with the owner about taking land for the bridge. The project could end up delayed and funding for the bridge could be at risk if the process takes too long.

The Commission has a signed purchase and sale for \$482,500.00. This is a backup offer as the owner has 2 other offers that are being pursued ahead of our offer. This property will have multiple purposes for the town. Some land will be needed for the bridge, there is a two family house on the lot, this will be a public park and will also be conservation land. The Commission uses their funds for the purchase and maintenance of conservation land. The Selectmen and the Commission have drawn up a Memorandum of Understanding for the cost of the property. The Commission will pay the full price of the property, then the Selectmen will have 3 years to reimburse the Commission for approximately two-thirds the cost of the property. The Selectmen may use multiple methods to raise the money to reimburse the Commission such as grants, warrant articles, applied surpluses, and/or fund raising. The School Board is in favor of this use of the property and would support the public trail going through the school properties.

Jeff Gowan wrote a grant for a sidewalk/pedestrian bridge to cross Beaver Brook from the subject property to the Walgreen's property years ago. The grant proposal is being revisited at this time. Abbott Bridge is too narrow for pedestrians to walk across it safely. This pedestrian walkway would come off Old Bridge Street into the subject property some distance. The path would then cross Beaver Brook to the Walgreen's property, then run along the brook back to Old Bridge Street. This proposed path may be on the low land along the Walgreen's side of the brook. This may flood in high water times, we are not sure the exact path at this time.

Brian Johnson, the Parks and Recreation director, and Mr. Steward went to Concord to talk about rehabilitating the waterways in Pelham. There is a town owned parcel on Lane Road that was designed to be a public access to Beaver Brook. It has since over grown and fallen to disrepair. Mr. Johnson and Mr. Steward would like to open this space back up to the public and have a boat launch for Beaver Brook. Mr. Johnson recently launched a boat and traveled down the brook. The subject parcel could be a takeout point or a rest point for travel down the rest of the brook in town. Pelham has several parcels along the brook from the Windham line to the Dracut line. In total, there are 8 miles of Beaver Brook in Pelham. This would be a multiyear project to open this parcel and open up the brook for public use.

Mr. Stanvick questioned the cost of the property. We did not have an independent appraisal done on the property. The appraised value as stated on the property card valued the property at

\$344,900.00 in 2021. The negotiated price for the Commission is \$482,500.00, which is considerably more. The land owner was asking \$499,900.00. The current real estate market is dictating the price of the property. Our offer is a backup offer. There are other buyers ahead of us in this process. We may not get this property. In that case, we may try to get an easement on the property for a trail, from the new owner.

Open to Public:

Mr. Jim Greenwood spoke in favor of the purchase and especially of the pedestrian bridge project. Abbott Bridge is too narrow for pedestrians to safely cross. Abbott Bridge cannot be widened. The only other logical decision to be made is to construct a pedestrian crossing for the brook. The new proposed park and walking trail will be a great addition to the town properties. Mr. Greenwood is all in favor of this purchase.

Motion: (Stanvick/Bowden) to agree to purchase this property as presented for \$482,500.00.
Vote: 5-0-0 in favor

MINUTES:

Motion: (Gendreau/Stanvick) to approve the minutes of April 13, 2022.
Vote: 4-0-1 in favor. Bowden abstained.

Motion: (Stanvick/Gendreau) to approve the non-public minutes of April 13, 2022.
Vote: 4-0-1 in favor. Bowden abstained.

WALK-IN ITEMS:

Mr. Stanvick recently saw a news story about two people killed on a trail in Concord, NH. He was wondering if we had police regularly monitoring our trails. The town owns a lot of property with a lot of trails. He is concerned about safety on the trails. He has seen people taking drugs and drinking at Wolven. The Commission is buying property and asking people to use the property. He would like to know what the town is doing about safety on the trails. He wants to know if we have liability if there is trouble on the trails. He will follow up with the police department to see if they have protocols for monitoring the trails. Mr. Bowden said there is no way to fully monitor all the trails. There are 55-60 miles of trails spread all through town. Forestry has cut back vegetation to make parking areas more visible and more inconvenient for loitering. There is no way to afford full time monitoring on all trails. Fire and police have vehicles that can access the trails. Town trails are open dawn to dusk every day.

Commission members are working to all get on the town email system. Mr. Bowden has had some difficulty and will talk to Brian Demers, the town IT manager, to see if he can help. Ms. Mackay said all previous applicants have her home email so contact would be made in that manner. Members agreed to try to transition to full town email by next meeting. Ms. Mackay will continue to send messages on both town and personal email at this time.

Mr. Stanvick again mentioned how we can be more open and allow public participation in our meetings from residents that are unable to attend due to health or other issues. Facebook runs live for our meetings, so Brian Demers can be asked if there could be a way to connect comments from residents during the meetings.

Mr. Stanvick congratulated Mr. Gendreau on his appointment to the ATV committee. This group was voted on at the March ballot. They will discuss and come up with recommendations for the use of off road vehicles on town lands. No meetings have taken place yet. Three residents applied to be on the committee. Mr. Gendreau thinks the Selectmen are going to allow them all to participate. This is a loose group, no swearing in is necessary. Ms. Mackay suggested minutes or notes be kept to keep track of good ideas and ideas that have been discarded as unworkable or unreasonable.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion: (Mackay/Bowden) to adjourn.

Vote: 5-0-0 in favor.

Adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Mackay,
Recording Secretary