

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

MEETING OF 02/16/22

Members Present:

Karen Mackay, Paul Gagnon,
Lisa Loosigian, Al Steward,
Mike Gendreau,
Kara Kubit (alt)(late)

APPROVED 04/13/22

Members Absent:

Denis Hogan, Ken Stanvick,
Scott Bowden (alt)

Paul Gagnon brought the meeting to order at 7:07 p. m. This meeting was moved to the third week from our regularly scheduled time because the School Board Deliberative session was held on the second Wednesday this month. Ms. Kubit was appointed to vote tonight.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Map 1 Lot 5-105	Property location: Pelham/Hudson town line – Proposal to purchase approximately 25 acres for use as conservation land – Presentation by Paul Gagnon.
-----------------	--

This property was discussed in non-public session prior to bringing the parcel forward to a public hearing. In non-public session, Commission members generally agree to pursue an acquisition. As with all other land purchases, the members agreed to pursue this purchase prior to this hearing.

This property is located in the northern tip of the town off Lawrence Corner Road. The area has extensive trails as the town of Hudson has a 52 acre town forest to the west of the proposed Pelham purchase with an entrance off Keys Hill Road. The town of Hudson has proposed to purchase a 28 acre parcel to the east of their town forest and abutting the Pelham/Hudson town line. The town of Pelham has proposed to purchase the adjacent parcel of 25 acres also abutting the Pelham/Hudson town line. The two parcels are owned by the same land owner. The purchase of the Pelham parcel is contingent on Hudson buying the Hudson lot. The land is largely forested. The parcel in town is steeply hilly with a flat hill top. No substantial wetlands are on the parcel.

Mr. Gagnon first talked about this land in 2008. At that time, he had walked the property. No progress was made for many years. Recently, Hudson started working with the land owner and signed a purchase and sale for the Hudson lot. Mr. Gagnon spoke to the Hudson Conservation Commission and the land owner. He brought this proposed land acquisition to the Pelham Conservation Commission in non-public session and the members agreed to pursue the purchase.

The town of Hudson has agreed to pay \$150,000.00 for the 28 acre lot in Hudson. Using the same dollars per acre, Pelham and the owner agreed to a price of \$140,000.00. This price comes to \$5,600.00 per acre. The Commission uses a target price of \$7,000.00 per acre when we negotiate land purchases. Sometimes the price comes out to be higher and sometimes the price is lower as in this case. This lot is land locked which does affect the price of the land.

The property is land locked with access only through the town of Hudson. The purchase and sale for this property is contingent on Hudson buying the 28 acre parcel in their town. Pelham needs Hudson to buy their land so we can have access to the property through Hudson. In addition, we need Hudson to purchase their parcel in order to form a large contiguous block of land between the two towns. If both go through, there will be 50+ acres added to open space in the area making a one-hundred acre contiguous block of open space between Pelham and Hudson. Other potential open space land in the area is a large lot to the south-east of the subject parcel. This other land abuts Lawrence Corner Road and has a large open field and possibly farm fields. Open farm land and field habitats are valuable resources that are limited in Pelham.

Mr. Gagnon reviewed the Checklist for Open Space Acquisitions (Checklist) with the Commission. All criteria from the first section of the Checklist must be met in order to move forward with an acquisition. This parcel met all criteria. Multiple criteria from the second section were met including land connectivity, outdoor recreation, educational value, scenic views and wildlife habitat. There is potential for scenic views as the property has a large hill near the center. The parcel could be harvested for timber with the extraction point through Hudson. A thinning of trees near the top of the hill could open up scenic views and the trail system could be expanded in a manner to highlight this feature. The parcel had no qualities that would disqualify the lot from purchase.

The 52 acre town forest in Hudson has a parking area for approximately 6 to 8 cars. This would be the access for the proposed Pelham land purchase. There will be no parking lot in Pelham or access to the property through Pelham as the parcel is land locked.

The town of Hudson will possibly close on their lot in the May/June time frame. If the Commission votes in favor of the purchase tonight, we must go to Planning for their approval then the Selectmen will need to conduct 2 public hearings.

The town lawyer will be responsible for writing up the deed for this property. The Commission would like to make sure the deeds for both properties are similar as far as allowed uses. In addition, the Commission needs to make sure Pelham residents and town officials have access to the property through Hudson in perpetuity. Hudson must not be able to block access or use of the property from Pelham residents. Pelham residents must be able to park in the lot in Hudson.

Motion: (Steward/Loosigian) to recommend the purchase of this property to the Selectmen with the understanding that the deeds for the Hudson and Pelham properties will be similar for usage and that the Pelham residents will have access through the Hudson parking area.

Vote: 6-0-0 in favor.

WALK IN ITEMS:

There are nine warrant articles on the March ballot that pertain to conservation and forestry matters. Mr. Gagnon gave a brief explanation of each.

Article 4 is a \$2,500,000.00 (Two and a half million dollar) bond for the purposes of acquiring conservation land and expanding open space. The Commission has 4 land deals in process. With the closing of these deals all the funds from the 2004 bond and the 2018 bond will be used. In addition, the current use fund has been depleted from these purchases. The Commission is asking for a yes vote on this article so we may pursue land acquisitions this coming year. The land deals from this past year include a conservation easement on the 240 acre Steck Farm, an 85 acre purchase on Gumpas Pond, 12 acres off Dutton Road and the final land deal is to be voted on in March for 40 acres off Blueberry Circle (Article 11).

Articles 8 and 9 relate to the redesignation of prime wetlands that had been designated in 1987 and 2000. The boundaries have been remapped and the wetlands need to be voted on again for prime wetland status.

Article 10 is to increase the percentage of the current use funds that go to the Commission from 75% to 100%. These funds are raised when pieces of land over 10 acres come out of current use. Current use is a tax break given to owners of large parcels with the purpose to keep the land open. When one of these parcels is sold, the owner needs to pay 10% of the sale price to the town as a tax. The Commission wants 100% of this money to use for land acquisitions.

Article 12 will allow the Forestry Committee to authorize their own expenditures for forest management purposes. This account has funds generated from timber harvests. This will allow them to take money as needed to perform necessary functions related to forest management. Article 13 is requesting \$56,100.00 from the forestry fund be released in order to conduct forest management activities for the coming year.

Articles 19 and 20 are a request to change portions of Spaulding Hill and Tower Hill from class 6 roads to class A trails. These roads are unmaintained town roads that have been abused by truck drivers and off road vehicle drivers. They have been damaged by this traffic. They have been used by out-of-towners to do off road driving. The reclassification will also include locked gates to prevent access to drivers.

The Commission would like a yes vote on each of these articles as the purpose of the articles is to protect the environment and promote the safe and responsible use of town land.

There is also a citizen's petition on the warrant. The Commission discussed the petition at our last meeting. The wording of the proposed article was changed at the deliberative session. The petition now asks for a vote to establish a committee of 5 people (1 Conservation, 1 Selectman, 1 Forestry, 2 members of the public) to study the possibility of allowing ATV's on some town land. The committee has one year to make recommendations to the Selectmen.

Ms. Loosigian is concerned about the excessive salt on the roads. This is an environmental concern because the salt washes off the roads and flows into water bodies. We need to keep the roads safe, but too much salt is environmentally damaging. The Green Snow Pro program through DES offers training for salt usage. Jim Hoffman is the new road agent in town. Ms. Loosigian will speak with him and see if training has been done or should be done. We do not want to be using more salt than needed on the roadways.

Mr. Gendreau acknowledged the Pelham Border Riders Snowmobile Club for their contributions to the town over the past 50 years. The Club formed about 55 years ago as a group of people who liked to ride. They have been working with town boards and land owners to improve trails for the past 50 years. They have spent about \$250,000.00 over that time to make improvements to the trails. The Club is one of the most successful in the state. Mr. Gendreau wanted to acknowledge them, town boards and residents for working together to improve the town. He said we all need to work together to accomplish our land use goals. He also mentioned that towns like Hudson and Windham are following us in their efforts to conserve land. Windham has a 6.2 million dollar bond on their warrant.

Conservation members will be working on our Natural Resources Inventory (NRI) when we finish this meeting. We have been working on the NRI for several months, led by Mr. Steward with help from Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC). We will be discussing edits tonight then we will set up a meeting with NRPC to finalize the project. The timing of this rewrite of the NRI is good because the Master Plan is due for a rewrite this year and the NRI will feed into the Master Plan.

MINUTES:

Motion: (Steward/Loosigian) to approve the minutes of January 12, 2022.

Vote: 4-0-2 in favor. Kubit and Gendreau abstained.

Motion: (Steward/Loosigian) to approve non-public session minutes of January 12, 2022.

Vote: 4-0-2 in favor. Kubit and Gendreau abstained.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion: (Mackay/Steward) to adjourn.

Vote: 6-0-0 in favor.

Adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Mackay,
Recording Secretary