

EATON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

December 11, 2023

1. Meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm. Members present were Marnie Cobbs, Tom Head, Dick Fortin and Holly Fortin. Also present was Dagmar von Schwerin.

2. **ADMINISTRATION** – *Minutes of the November 13 meeting were accepted.*

3. TREASURER'S REPORT

Conservation Fund	\$14,799.32 - CD \$10,040.85
Forest Management Fund	\$18,085.96 - CD \$30,122.55
Land Conservation Fund	\$ 5,733.61 - CD \$10,040.85
Foss Mountain Fund	\$18,157.67
 TOTAL	 \$106,980.81
 Donation box at trailhead	 \$0
Website Donation Income	\$0

Treasurer's report was accepted.

4. **SELECTMEN'S REPORT** – Selectmen were divided about designating 21 acres off Ben Road seized for unpaid taxes as Town Forest, citing the amount of land already so designated and potential tax income from private ownership. Ongoing income from a Town Forest designation will not be high as the land has been heavily timbered, and blueberry income has been decreasing. Private ownership would require build-out and maintenance of the Class VI road by a new owner. Marnie volunteered to speak for ECC at the annual Town Meeting to present the pros and cons and offer to pay back taxes (if this is allowed by statute) so that the town does not lose that revenue.

Dick reminded ECC about the meeting reporting on Eaton's Capital Improvement Plan on January 2 at 6:30

5. **PLANNING BOARD** – The Board reviewed language for proposed minor zoning amendments to wireless telecom., steep slope protections, changes in the definition of structure as applied to patios and docks, home occupations, camping and recreational vehicles, acceptance of private of Class VI roads by the Town and clarification of the boundaries of the Village District. The Board also developed language to allow changes in height of non-conforming structures if certain conditions are satisfied.

6. **FOSS MANAGEMENT** – no issues

7. **TOWN LAND MANAGEMENT** – Logging income, careful management, donated volunteer time and past blueberry profits have helped to grow the original amount of the ECC's funds quite considerably, keeping the ECC financially self-sustaining. ECC is developing a 10-year budget to show how the money in each account is scheduled to be spent, covering anticipated costs without the need to come to the Town for additional funding.

Dick and Marnie will coordinate work on the ECC 10-year budget with input from Commission members. The cutting schedule with Horizon will be fine-tuned. Opportunities to fund burns, including grants or bird/pollinator surveys that trigger USFWS underwriting will be explored. Trail costs are estimated based on erosion from increased use and recurring extreme weather events. Additional upcoming costs include Forestry reviews, watershed management training, treatment of invasive plants in lakes and on land, boundary painting, surveying costs, possible easement costs, and bridge deck replacement, all balanced with reduced income as blueberry fields become less productive and town forests recuperate for the next 10-15 years. Marnie and Dagmar will work with Robin to find the best ways to track and report on income and expenses in specific categories in the new online Quicken software.

Mark Carbone and Paul Nuccio discussed water testing protocols and will coordinate to ensure that prior test frequency, formats and locations are followed so that all results, historic and new, will mesh. Paul will be testing two additional sites.

Cliff Cabral did not test Crystal Lake this year but will do so next year. Enna may be able to work with him as she is a certified diver.

8. FOREST MANAGEMENT – Dick wrote up a Warrant Article, with concurrence from Attorney Laughlin, to formally designate all parcels of Town land as Town Forest with the exception of the blueberry fields around Foss which will be designated as Conservation Land. This will correct inconsistent language and upon approval, should be included in the NRI for reference.

9. COMMUNITY COHORT – Eaton Conservation Plan - Marnie presented three documents to be discussed at the next meeting including the Eaton Conservation Plan Outline, NHACC Handbook notes, and Master Plan Notes. Dennis Sullivan is addressing a bulk of the plan with his work on the NRI. Marnie read aloud from the appendices of the Master Plan - a summarized results of a survey of Town residents taken 2014(?). Work on the Conservation Plan will continue through 2024, providing an opportunity to clarify the purpose and goals of the Eaton Conservation Commission, prioritize conservation efforts and support the creation of the new Master Plan in 2025.

10. OTHER BUSINESS –

Culverts - Saco River Alliance and Green Mountain Conservation Group met with the Selectmen regarding the deteriorating condition of culverts in Carroll County. This group seeks to obtain a grant from FEMA for a financial study of estimated costs to replace/repair 450 culverts. They require a Letter of Signature from the 13 towns involved. 50% have signed on to date - 2 towns with letters signed by Selectmen, others with letters signed by the town's Planning Board or Conservation Commission.

Eaton has 53 stream crossings, 11 of which had “no passage” scores for aquatic pass-through. Most are along State roads. The group discussed whether financial assistance for private owners to upgrade their culverts would be included in any FEMA payouts. Because ultimate responsibility for the costs (State vs private vs Town roads) is unclear, the Selectmen will not sign the Letter of Support. The group decided that the Planning Board should respond to the request for Letters of Support as this is not strictly in the ECC's domain.

On a related topic, Dick measured a narrow 18” clearance under one bridge on Potter Road, with water backing up due to beaver activity. The same is true at Waukeela Camp. Marnie will contact the group who spoke at the NHACC conference – Beaver Deceivers – about potential

consulting to address the beaver issues holistically. Dick will contact NH Fish and Game to discuss as well.

Foss Mountain Road winter access –Marnie raised concerns about the allowance given to the A-frame residents to use the Town's winter parking lot to stage their cars and snow track vehicle, and using Foss Mountain Road to access their off-the-grid house. The tracks and flattened berm may encourage inappropriate use from Foss Mt Rd. It has been the goal of the ECC to keep Foss Mountain accessible yet not so busy that that habitat becomes fractured. Dick explained that they asked for allowance, given that their usual access point off Ben Road was too boggy to traverse with the snow track until the ground freezes. This is meant to be a temporary solution to prevent Ben Road access from being further damaged. Landowners have to be able to access their land, and they are taxpayers so the winter lot was made temporarily usable by them with a special allowance. Concerns regarding damage to the Foss Mountain road and parking at the Winter Parking lot were reviewed by the Road Agent with no objections expressed.

Next meeting: January 8, 2024 at 6 pm

Meeting was adjourned at 7:55 pm

Respectfully submitted by Dagmar von Schwerin, Recording Secretary