

Chairman Frank Lombardi called the meeting to order at 4:08 p.m.

Members Present: Frank Lombardi- Chairman, Donald LaPlante- Vice Chair, Edith Worcester, Marsha Lombardi and Tina Wright - Secretary

Members Absent: Valerie Yelton and Ken Jordan

Guests Present: Steve Agius, Marcia Hammon, Rick Wright, David Chase and Arthur Hammon

Pondicherry Trail: Steve Agius who is the manager of the wildlife refuge and oversees the Pondicherry Refuge joined the meeting to discuss the Pondicherry Trail and the parking situation at the site. Pondicherry is a division of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge. Mr. Agius explained how refuge lands are primarily opened to the public. Some times they are not, because of endangered species. There are six primary uses of refuge land. They are hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education and interpretation. There are over 190 million acres of conserved lands in the U.S., there are 566 national wildlife refuges nationwide that range from 1 acre in size to 20 million. \$100,000 has been given to the State of NH to improve the rail trail. The current project going on right now and all permits have been approved is to improve four miles of the rail trail. They will be restoring the ditch lines along the rail trail, replacing culverts and adding about 4-6" in depth of crushed stone. Frank asked Mr. Agius about their parking problem. Mr. Agius said currently there is enough parking there for maybe 5 vehicles, we would like to see more and we've seen up to 15 or more trying to park there and would like to keep people off the side of the road. There are blind corners through there and the topography is steep. The buffer there is mostly balsam fir, dealing with a lot of blow downs right now. Marsha asked if a solar farm is put there could Mr. Agius or the Department of Interiors work with us to keep the wildlife corridors secure? Steve said of course, if we were to attend a Selectmen's meeting it would be for educational purposes, we would not weigh in on anything else. The Conservation Commission viewed maps of the recently cut wooded area, Rick Wright from the WEDC showed the areas of wetlands and what was cut and not cut. Mr. Agius stated that wetlands are not an easy process with DES, NH is by far the strictest. WEDC was involved with the clear cut and the revenue for that cut and were going to start the marketing process but the Selectmen have kind of taken that off the table. Mr. Agius stated the clear cut was not picturesque, some species will benefit; the american woodcock. If it became a solar farm the woodcock would not stick around. David Chase asked Mr. Agius if they have considered making parking on the other end on 115. Mr. Agius said there definitely should be a conversation about that idea. Frank mentioned if the wood chip plant stays running the lines that are existing cannot take any more megawatts so

there is a chance this solar farm will never happen and perhaps the Selectmen would be willing to sell to the Department of Interior. Mr. Agius mentioned they would pay to have it appraised and offer fair market value. The U.S. Department of Trans offers a Federal Land Access Program (flap) grant, this comes up every five years. A lot of paperwork involved with this grant. New Hampshire normally see around one million dollars and the towns usually have to commit to 20% of project.

Site Visit- The Pine Shadows:

Frank attended the Selectmen's meeting Monday night (August 12, 2019) and talked to them about a trail that the Conservation Commission is interested in creating. A recent merger of land owned by the town of Whitefield for the sewer plant lots brought this to Franks attention. Frank said he used to go down there all the time when he was a kid. The after school program is held here in the downstairs section of the Town Office, this could be an activity the kids and counselors could enjoy after school. Frank showed everyone some pictures of the trail. It's a 0.8 mile round trip loop. He said it's a pretty simplistic trail, would not be messing with the environment at all. Mr. Hammon asked about the rail line, if it had been changed over from rails to trails? Franks said that at the Selectmen's meeting he was advised to get permission from the state to use the trail, the State of NH still has control of that. According to the law, people are not supposed to walk on it unless you have permission. It has not been decommissioned as a rail line at this time. Mr. Wright asked if any costs of this would be coming from the conservation commissions budget, Frank said yes. Mr. Chase asked if there were any other possible access points to this. Frank said yes but it is a private residential area and doesn't think that area should be opened up for that. Frank feels keeping the starting point behind the Town Office is the best. Mr. Wright asked if any construction for treatment plant going on would change the layout of this. Frank said he had talked with Fred Ingerson from the water department and he thought it would be higher up on the property away from the trails.

The Conservation Commission and guests took a walk down the trail.

Frank spoke with a couple of the abutters on the trail. They gave a little feedback that during the winter, people always go to their house by mistake thinking the snowmobile trail continues through their yard. Perhaps some better signage needs to be put in. The commission discussed eliminating the back side loop of this trail for now. One section is pretty steep. Mr. Hammon said that insurance might require a stairway and a handrail. You may end up with a big construction project. Frank mentioned the Selectmen are looking into the town's insurance to see what they have to say about that. Mr. Hammon said he doesn't think at this point there is anything of great interest on the back side of the loop that you are looking to eliminate. Mr. LaPlante suggested that the sewer department should put a lock on the access gate that is down there. Everyone agreed to eliminating the loop for now. Frank is going to write a letter to the State of NH to request the use of a portion of the railbed.

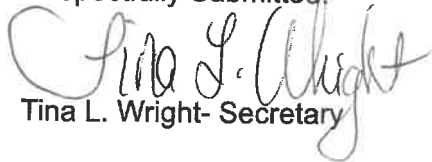
Next meeting will be Wednesday, September 4, 2019 at 4:30 p.m.

**Edith Worcester moved to approve the minutes as is from the June 13, 2019 meeting.
Seconded by Marsha Lombardi, no further discussion, all in favor, motion carries.**

**Donald LaPlante moved to approve the minutes as is from the July 10, 2019 meeting.
Seconded by Edith Worcester, no further discussion, all in favor, motion carries.**

Adjournment: Donald LaPlante moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:46 p.m., Marsha Lombardi seconded, meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted:


Tina L. Wright- Secretary


Frank Lombardi- Chairman