

Lebanon Conservation Commission
Regular Meeting, 11/2/09
Minutes

Call to order, 4:34 p.m.

Members present: Keith Laporte, Marc Lang, Alton Blodgett, Howard Wayland, Jan Fitter, Jon Slate, Emery Gluck, David Scata, Toni Willard

Members absent: none

Also present: Town Planner Phil Chester

Motion to approve minutes of 10/5/09 regular meeting; seconded and passed unanimously.

No audience present.

Marc and Phil toured Lebanon for 2½ hours with Kip Kolesinskas of the USDA/Soil Service to assess properties potentially eligible for federal grants. Phil summarized and distributed a summary memo. Phil and Marc also created a masterlist of farm properties, which can be used for invitations to a landowner summit, probably in Feb. or March. The owner of property 09-I continues to show interest.

Phil explained the FRPP program's grant procedures. FRPP grants require a Town or non-profit match of 25% of conservation easement value. Kip explained to Marc and Phil other grant programs, under the 2008 Farm Bill, that could help with land protection and provided a summary list. In particular, the Wetlands Reserve Program pays farmers up to \$5,000 per acre to place a permanent easement on wetlands property to prohibit farming, with the aim of preserving wetlands. Jan noted that another of the new federal programs was discussed at the Windham County Conservation Consortium (WICC) meeting: the Healthy Forests Reserve Program provides financial assistance in the form of easement payments and cost-share for specific conservation actions completed by the landowner.

Phil also reported the following: The Selectmen will make an offer on the Koziol property for cemetery space. The State is soliciting a new lease holder for the farm portion of the Savin property. Phil has submitted the Town's application for this year's Agriculture Viability Grant – continued support of Farmers' Market, some money for appraisals, and other needed items.

Commons Hill Trail: Jon is donating a gate. Discussion of needed signs. One needs to note road closure -- probably best to post warning at the other end, where active Schalk Road terminates; main concern might be people getting stuck. Work party planned for Sun., Nov. 8.

Jan discussed various natural resource conservation planning activities that the commission should be thinking about – open space corridor plan, vernal pool inventory (would likely require grant money), invasives policy. Will research and discuss again.

Discussion of scenic road candidates. A North Street landowner has requested that North Street be considered for scenic road status. Conservation Commission will begin process of obtaining scenic road designation, starting with contacting land owners.

Motion to approve 2010 meeting dates – first Monday of each month with necessary exceptions – seconded and passed unanimously.

WICC: Jan attended their October meeting. They meet roughly quarterly to discuss regional issues, compare notes, and have conservation presentations. They don't "do" much right now, but seems worthwhile to try to have a representative at their meetings. Next in second half of January.

Rechlin Baseline Documentation Report: target finish date of 12/1; is needed for closing (before the end of the year).

Motion to adjourn at c. 6:00 pm, seconded and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by Jan Fitter, Sec'y.