

**Town of Northwood
Conservation Commission Minutes - DRAFT
January 3, 2023**

1 Chair Levergood called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

2 **Present:** Chair Grace Levergood, Vice-Chair Susan Romano, Grace Mattern, Wini
3 Young, Steve Hampl, Tom Chase, and Priscilla Merrill participated electronically due
4 to medical reasons.

5 **Town Staff:** Land Use Specialist Linda Smith, Land Use Administrative Assistant Lisa
6 Fellows-Weaver.

7 **MINUTES**

8 **Mr. Chase made a motion, seconded by Ms. Young, to approve the minutes of**
9 **September 6, 2022.**

10 **Chair Levergood amended the motion, seconded by Mr. Chase, to approve the**
11 **minutes of September 6, 2022, with edits that do not alter the content. Motion**
12 **carried by a roll call vote; 5/0/2. Ms. Romano and Mr. Hampl abstained.**

13 **APPOINTMENTS**

14 ***Town Forester Bryan Comeau ~ Report Review***

15 Mr. Comeau met with the Commission to review his findings from the updated forest
16 resource inventory and to continue discussion relative to the update of the Forest
17 Management Plan. His report was previously circulated.

18 Mr. Comeau explained that an overall management philosophy would be to have large
19 blocks of "natural" areas with no harvesting in combination with existing wetlands and
20 buffers, and areas suitable for active forest management. He stated that the market for
21 wood is variable with estimate phases; he will provide rate ranges, based on the State
22 of NH. The actual figures will not be available until the end of the process. He
23 estimated that there could be approximately \$25,000 – \$30,000 in value.

24 Mr. Comeau explained the process of harvesting is different and is dictated by the size
25 of the parcel, the amount of timber volume, and size of access. He reviewed the
26 current conditions report noting the School Lots are scheduled for harvesting this
27 year. The plan will be to do the work in the fall of 2023, which could continue into the
28 winter of 2024. He described the Lucas Pond Road lot as having had some damage. He
29 commented he is hesitant to thin the area again due to the fact that it is adjacent to a
30 town road and within the public eye, and permissions required from the State of NH.
31 He recommended removing the declining pine to regenerate the area. He suggested
32 signage and hosting a public tour to explain the process and reasoning for the timber
33 harvest.

34 Ms. Young commented that clearing along the edge of the road may not be seen as
35 such an issue if it is removed due to potential impacts to power lines.

36 Chair Levergood suggested a statement be added to the Town's website when the
37 project is occurring. She agreed that there should be signage at the site as well and
38 supported the idea of offering a site walk of the area.

39 Mr. Chase commented that the residents in the area should be made aware of the
40 timber harvest due to safety issues and the need to clear the area of the power lines.

41 Discussion ensued relative to the options available, a full harvest or just a thinning.

**Town of Northwood
Conservation Commission Minutes - DRAFT
January 3, 2023**

42 Ms. Romano suggested a harvest as a thinning could cause more blow downs with the
43 potential for more issues. She asked what the cost of a kiosk would be, showing that
44 the Commission's actively working within the Town's forests.

45 Mr. Chase asked about the removal process along roads. Mr. Comeau explained that
46 there is an excellent access point in the area with enough room.

47 Additional discussion was held regarding the bidding process. Ms. Smith explained
48 that the forester typically handles all aspects of the bid process. Mr. Comeau stated
49 that he has pre-vetted contractors that he uses.

50 Mr. Comeau spoke to the second School Lot located on Upper Camp Road. He
51 explained the last time this area was managed the access was via a smaller lot, which
52 was owned by the Town and has recently been sold. He recommended a survey be
53 done to set the pins at the access point in advance of any work being done. He
54 referenced a quote he provided, in the amount of \$3,100. The prior survey from 1982
55 was reviewed. Additional discussion was held relative to payment of the survey. Mr.
56 Comeau explained that the cost can be paid upfront directly by the Town, or it can be
57 performed through him then deducted from the value of the timber harvested, which is
58 similar to how the updated Forest Management Plan is being done.

59 Ms. Young stated that the boundary has been a problem. She stated that it would be
60 great to have a survey completed of all the Town property.

61 Ms. Smith stated that the current balance in the Forest Management fund is \$3,550.
62 These funds are available and can pay for surveys. Discussion ensued relative to the
63 survey, funding, and timing.

64 Mr. Comeau stated that he could obtain another quote for a survey of the entire lot;
65 everything that abuts the Lucas Pond camps and return to another meeting for
66 additional discussions.

67 This item was continued to the February 7 meeting.

68 ***8:00 p.m. - Bob Young ~ Water District Conservation Land***

69 Bob Young, Commissioner of The Village of Northwood Ridge Water District (VNRWD),
70 along with Kaitlyn Deyo of Bear-Paw Regional Greenways Land Trust (BPRGLT) met
71 with the Commission to discuss a plan to place the Water Districts land holdings into
72 a conservation easement, to be held by Bear-Paw. This proposal includes seven
73 parcels known as the Acorn Ponds Conservation Overlay District to protect the water
74 supply in the future.

75 Mr. Young gave an overview of the current land holdings and reviewed a packet
76 including maps of the parcels, water bodies within the area, and future areas of focus.
77 He stated that they are working with NHDES for future land purchases. He mentioned
78 that there will be a grant opportunity available in 2024.

79 Mr. Young stated that he met with the Commission in December 2018 to discuss the
80 Commission's assistance to cover transaction costs associated with acquiring
81 conservation easements, including survey costs.

82 Ms. Deyo reviewed the proposed budget for Phase 1, totaling \$42,950. This amount
83 includes associated costs including legal costs and stewardship of the easement. The

**Town of Northwood
Conservation Commission Minutes - DRAFT
January 3, 2023**

84 cost of Phase 2 is \$19,250 and is associated with the expenses related to the project
85 management.

86 Mr. Young explained that the Water District has proposed a warrant article for this
87 year to allow the Board of Commissioners to place conservation easements on these
88 parcels totaling 127.3 acres. The Board of Commissioners (BOC) for the Village District
89 are seeking funds from the Northwood Conservation Commission (NCC) to place all
90 five parcels under a conservation easement. He added that the project's timing will be
91 through to the 2024 District meeting.

92 Ms. Mattern asked about the parcels that are for sale. Mr. Young stated that there are
93 two parcels for sale and the Village District has had discussions with the owners who
94 have taken the lots off the market. He noted that the Village District owns their parcels
95 outright, the Town does not own the land.

96 Ms. Mattern asked how many homes are serviced by the Water District. Mr. Young
97 replied that currently the District serves 65 homes and also covers the elementary
98 school. He proceeded to review the entire range of the District.

99 Ms. Mattern asked what the value would be if the lands were in a conservation
100 easement. Mr. Young explained that there is no real protection of the land currently.
101 This is the best approach in order to save and protect the area as deeds and
102 easements can change with owners. He referenced the Town's Master Plan, which
103 indicates that this is an area that should be saved as a part of the woodlands and
104 wetlands. An easement would protect the north side of Rte. 4 and provide additional
105 protections of the many watersheds and headwaters of the many water supplies in the
106 area.

107 Ms. Smith explained that the Board of Selectmen will need to approve the funding. The
108 Commission will then need to hold a public hearing to spend the funds. She confirmed
109 that Bear-Paw will be doing the work. Mr. Young replied yes as Bear-Paw holds the
110 easement and covers the expenses. He noted that the ownership was done back in
111 2004.

112 **On a motion made by Chair Levergood, and seconded by Ms. Mattern, the**
113 **Commission voted unanimously, by a roll call vote, to recommend the Board of**
114 **Selectmen move the District's proposed lands into a conservation easement, in**
115 **which \$42,950 will be expended from the existing current use fund for the**
116 **beginning of Phase 1.**

117 A public hearing will be held at the May 2, meeting.

118 Mr. Young requested support from the Commission for the District to move forward
119 with the grant process; consensus was yes.

120 **INTERNAL BUSINESS**

121 ***Conservation Deed – Hannaford & Town***

122 Ms. Smith provided a brief description of the deed between the Town and Hannaford
123 and indicated that the easement is to be monitored by the Board of Selectmen.

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**Town of Northwood
Conservation Commission Minutes - DRAFT
January 3, 2023**

126 **CORRESPONDENCE**

127 ***Surface Water Quality Assessment***

128 Chair Levergood explained that NHDES is looking for information on monitoring of the
129 Town's waterways, VLAK program reports.

130 Mr. Chase commented that Jenness Pond does a yearly water assessment and there
131 are lake hosts. He stated that there are yearly water samples taken and they also
132 utilize Secchi disks.

133 Ms. Mattern stated that Long Pond has an association, and she believes that they do
134 some type of water quality testing.

135 Mr. Hampl noted that NH Fish and Game may have some information relative to Lucas
136 Pond due to the fact that they stock the pond.

137 It was noted that there are associations for both Northwood Lake and Pleasant Lake
138 that would have information; it may have been provided to NHDES.

139 Ms. Smith noted that Harvey Lake has an association and also does monitoring.

140 Chair Levergood stated that she would reach out to Matt Wood of NHDES to complete
141 the assessment.

142 **OTHER**

143 ***Earth Day – April 22***

144 Add to February 4 agenda for ideas and a plan for clean up around Town.

145 ***Conservation Fund***

146 Ms. Smith stated that this Current Use Fund deposit was \$19,531.82. The grand total
147 in the fund is \$181,888.

148 ***Town Lots ~ Timber Harvesting***

149 Mr. Chase asked if there are other town owned parcels that could be considered for
150 harvesting. He noted the parcels neighboring the police station and implied that this
151 could be a potential property for a new station.

152 ***Variance Application***

153 Ms. Smith stated that a variance application has been submitted by
154 Millstone/Ledgewood Realty Properties, David Docko. She explained that with new
155 legislation, all variances will sunset or expire after two years if there has not been any
156 activity for the relief. In 2006, the ZBA granted Mr. Docko a variance for a quarry
157 operation in the rear of the property, which is within the Conservation Overlay
158 District; this variance will expire in April. Mr. Docko is re-applying for a use variance
159 for the quarry, which is deemed as a non-residential use. She suggested that the
160 Commission appoint someone to look at the variance, comment, and/or represent at
161 the ZBA meeting. She explained that the applicant submitted an application for an
162 extension to the variance. She stated that in her opinion the applicant should re-apply
163 and provide answers to all criteria; that application was updated and was received
164 today.

**Town of Northwood
Conservation Commission Minutes - DRAFT
January 3, 2023**

165 A discussion was held regarding the overall project. Ms. Smith stated that the
166 applicant has received conditional approval and the AOT permit is still outstanding.

167 Ms. Young asked what can be done. She stated that she has done much research on
168 this project and a restoration plan was required or some type of a document indicating
169 a solid restoration plan, and nothing has been received. She noted that there was a list
170 of items to be done that was created from a discussion held with Mr. Docko.

171 Ms. Smith stated that a restoration plan was part of a conditional approval. She stated
172 that the Commission can provide a statement to the ZBA expressing their position
173 with the proposed non-residential use due to the long-term investment in the project.

174 Ms. Romano stated that the proposal is developing wetlands and there should be a
175 restoration plan.

176 Ms. Young stated that the roads will need to be built to access the area. Ms. Smith
177 stated that is their plan.

178 Ms. Young and Chair Levergood offered to attend the meeting to express the
179 Commission's overall concern with the project and the fact that a restoration plan has
180 not been presented; therefore, the Commission is hesitant with taking any action of
181 providing any recommendations.

182 The AOT permit issues will be looked at and reviewed.

183 Ms. Smith noted that the applicant stated that they would provide a plan tomorrow.

184 **ADJOURNMENT**

185 ***Motion to adjourn was made by Chair Levergood, seconded by Ms. Mattern, and***
186 ***unanimously accepted via roll call vote at 9:05 pm.***

187 Respectfully submitted,

188

189 Lisa Fellows-Weaver,

190 Land Use Administrative Assistant