

Draft MINUTES
Meeting of the Ad-Hoc Committee on Land Conservation
of the
Tamworth Conservation Commission (TCC)
Friday, August 27, 2010
Tamworth Town Office Meeting Room

Draft minutes to be reviewed and approved at a subsequent meeting.

Present: Ned Beecher (TCC Chair), David Little, John Mersfelder, Chele Miller, Nelson O'Bryan, Kate Thompson

Additional participants: Bob Butcher, Chris Conrod, Theresa Swanick, David White

The meeting was brought to order at 9:35 by Ned Beecher.

Ned raised the option of entering into non-public session, since the meeting was likely to discuss negotiations on property interests. The Committee agreed, however, to remain in public session in the interests of openness and given that discussions of very specific negotiations were not expected.

Background

Ned reviewed the background leading up to this point:

This ad-hoc Committee worked on the Gilman Forest land preservation project last year, conducting most of the necessary fundraising. That project is still being completed, but is expected to proceed. The Committee then was willing to look at land protection interests along Route 25 west of So. Tamworth village. One significant landowner had approached the TCC with interest in selling conservation easements on his property.

The Committee has met a few times in the past 8 months, wrestling with possible options for meeting the goal of conserving that landowner's parcels along Route 25 that are important as part of the connectivity between the White Mountains and the Ossipees, a priority of TCC land conservation efforts. One option is getting federal Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) funding support, which has been explored, but it may be hard to obtain and would require some restrictions that may not be acceptable to the landowner. Ned and Kate have continued discussions with the interested landowner, who has now put one parcel of land on the market.

In the interest of keeping neighbors informed, Ned met with one set of neighbors. Ned also sent a letter to the owner of newly-subdivided properties just to the east in Sandwich, which have seen recent forestry activity and one of which is now advertised for sale. Ned inquired of that landowner's potential interest in preserving the one piece he owns in Tamworth, but has received no reply.

Kate reported her recent discussion with the landowner interested in preserving his property, indicating that his interest continues and suggesting there may be some wider opportunities in the neighborhood. This is the purpose of this meeting.

Discussion

David White reported on some recent land preservation efforts around the Bearcamp Pond area in eastern Sandwich and the mosaic of conserved lands there, suggesting the regional importance of the current Route 25 properties of this Committee's focus. Chris Conrod has completed an evaluation of the conservation value of the properties in question, finding a high value, which he reiterated at this meeting.

There was discussion of various options for putting together a larger and/or smaller land conservation effort in this western Tamworth/eastern Sandwich region and obtaining funding. Such things as annuities, conservation easements, fee-simple purchases, federal, and private foundation options (such as Lakes Region Conservation Trust) were discussed.

Action Items

- Short term: Kate, Ned, and David will develop a proposal for a possible near-term, likely private, effort toward conservation of a particular parcel of property. Ned will advise the TCC that it is possible that the TCC may be asked to hold a conservation easement on this or other properties in the area, and see if the TCC is supportive of this possibility.
- Ned will provide an update to the neighbors with which he has opened discussions.
- Longer-term: Committee members will work to create a written strategy for developing a proposal for a bigger-picture conservation initiative for these parts of these two towns. Such an initiative would be packaged for possible presentation to one or more of the larger private conservation organizations. The idea is to help ensure the continued mosaic of forests, working land, farmland, and wetlands, with a diversification of levels of protection and land uses, so as to help ensure that this area remains supportive for wildlife.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 pm.

Draft minutes submitted by Ned Beecher, August 29, 2010.