

NORTHFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Wednesday, November 28, 2018

5:30 P.M. Municipal Building

- I. **ROLL CALL:** Present were Commissioners Debbie Zuaro, Pam Knox, Laura Hill-Eubanks. Quorum was not present, therefore no business was decided upon.
- II. **SET/ADJUST AGENDA:** Add item for maple sugaring lease on Dustin's Pasture. Correct Agenda item on "Town Forest Plan," and change to "Town Plan." Add Cheney Field solar project update and EAB grant.
- III. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):** None
- IV. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Minutes of October 17, 2018. Tabled.
- V. **DISCUSSION:**
 - a. **Maple Sugaring Lease on Dustin's Pasture:** A commercial maple sugar producer has a lease for approximately 10,000 sugar maple tree taps in Dustin's Pasture. The land is in Berlin and Northfield, and is a Town Forest property belonging to Northfield. NCC has been contacted by two individuals separately expressing concerns over land or trail clearing, and construction of a building, apparently by the company tapping the trees. NCC reviewed the lease and it looks as though it allows for a building to be used for housing pumps, although the building being constructed may or may not be placed where the lease allows it. The lease also requires town approval before cutting any trees. There may be a problem with the lease terms regarding maple sugar taps under Current Use guidelines. NCC will plan to meet with the Select Board and offer its input.
 - b. **Recreation Grant Application:** Debbie attended a meeting of the newly formed Recreation Trail Planning group. The group is planning to apply for grants for establishing trails throughout the town and linking together town parks and recreation areas. A ridgeline trail from Paine Mountain to Berlin Town Forest may also be part of the grant applications and planning at some point. Debbie will continue to attend the meetings and communicate input from the NCC, and report back to NCC on the group's activities. NCC members would like part of the planning for the trails on Paine Mountain summit and the adjacent ridgeline to include a natural resources inventory of those areas in order to ensure that important or sensitive natural resources will be effectively protected throughout the process. The NR inventory could be grant funded, or we could see whether NCC has enough money to pay for it in the near future. Laura will research the NR inventory possibilities with Arrowwood Environmental, the consultant that carried out the previous inventory on the Town Forest. And will also ask Jens Hilke, state Wildlife Conservation Planner, if he would come speak with the NCC about recreation and conservation planning.
 - c. **EAB grant:** Ruth and Russ will be submitting a grant application to help prevent damage to town trees due to the Emerald Ash Borer. NCC discussed the details of the grant application. The application will now go to the town for its approval before its

submission.

- d. NCC Opening:** NCC has a vacancy and would like to post a notice to find a new member. Pam will send the announcement to the town. NCC will review any letters of interest submitted, and forward its recommendations to the Select Board for approval/appointment.
- e. NCC input on Town Plan:** The first draft of the Land Use and Natural Resources section of the Town Plan update will be received by the Planning Commission soon. It will be forwarded to the NCC for input.
- f. Cheney Field Solar Project Update:** NCC will provide input to the Select Board on the ballot item for the Town Meeting Day vote on whether to authorize a large-scale solar farm development on Cheney Field in the Town Forest. The members discussed the desirability and potential of finding alternative properties for solar project development, rather than using a valued public open space such as Cheney.

VI. OTHER BUSINESS: NCC will check to see what we currently have in the Conservation Fund. Confirm that any funds related to conservation go into that reserve fund. Those reserve funds may only be spent on conservation related projects as described in the Town Meeting Day (2017) ballot item that established the fund. NCC should establish and formalize criteria for use of the funds.

VII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: None

VI. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 PM.

These minutes are subject to changes and approval at the next meeting but are substantially correct.