

Nelson Conservation Commission
Hearing December 15, 2015
Notes

Draft

The following are notes from the public meeting held jointly with the Board of Selectmen regarding the proposed purchase of approximately 580 acres of land on Osgood and Hurd Hills for conservation and recreational purposes with funds put aside for that purpose and under the control of the Nelson Conservation Commission (NCC).

Present were selectmen: Susan Hansel and David Upton. NCC members present were Kathy Schillemat, Tom Newcombe, David Patek, Rick Church, and Anne McBride, alternate. (Susan Hansel also serves as a NCC alternate.)

David Upton opened the meeting at 7:00PM indicating that the selectmen intend to purchase the property in question using their authority under RSA 41:14-a and that this is the second meeting required by that RSA before the purchase can be made. He indicated that no current town tax money would be used for the project. He said that this was a meeting to discuss a matter that the Conservation Commission had been leading and turned the meeting over to Kathy Schillemat, chair of the Commission.

Kathy opened with a brief description of the project. She passed around three handouts: a map of the parcel to be acquired, the project and closing costs and one containing an estimate of the operating costs. The later two were created in response to specific questions at the public meeting held 12/2/15. The annual operating costs are estimated at \$1.48 per acre per year or \$861 per year. Timber revenue should cover this easily in the long run.

Kathy opened the meeting to comments and questions.

The first speaker thanked the Conservation Commission and the Harris Center for preserving this beautiful piece of land.

Q: Why couldn't the Harris Center just buy this?

A: Neither the Harris Center or the Nelson Conservation Commission had the money to do this alone.

Q: Please review the running costs. That's not much estimate for parking lot maintenance.

A: If we construct the parking lot well, the ongoing maintenance should be light. Most of that expense should be for Homestead Lane.

Q: How do you know we can maintain Homestead Lane for that?

A: We know the cost of maintain Homestead Lane now are roughly \$1,000 per year. We expect to co-operate with all the neighbors to agree on maintenance issues and

share those costs. We will likely improve Homestead Lane somewhat initially and this could help keep initial maintenance costs lower

Q What are our property tax losses?

A: Less than \$3,000

Q: Has there been a timber survey. Don't you think you should do that before the purchase? What are the plans for logging?

A: There has not been a timber survey. We will do that with the proceeds of the grant once we own the property. The current owner has logged it heavily and we do not anticipate timber operations soon.

Q: There were a number of questions about the details of the costs.

A: It was explained that these are averages. Some years the numbers will be \$0 others higher.

Q: Could we lose the grant? What if we do not make it an official town forest?

A: No. It has been awarded, but we must do what we undertook to get reimbursed. It doesn't matter to LWCF whether it is officially a town forest. They require that it be open to the public for recreation.

Q : What does having the Harris Center hold a conservation easement mean?

A: That's a document that prevents certain uses that are detrimental to conservation like mining, building houses. We will be writing this with the Harris Center. They will monitor the property to ensure that the terms of the easement are upheld. We hope to get people's suggestions for uses of the property tonight to help writing the easement

Kathy then asked the audience what uses they'd like to see?

Hiking, passive recreation

Research by school and college groups. It is ideal for several reasons including its size.

A community forest where residents in need could cut firewood after a timber harvest.

A place to bring children

A scenic backdrop to the town. These hills can be seen from many vantage points.

Concern expressed about ATV and snowmobile use: NCC: It is unlikely that ATVs will be allowed recreationally. We'll have to study the snowmobile question. Perhaps their use would be time and place limited.

Hunting: It will be permitted

Cross-country skiing and snowshoeing

Open up the vistas and let light in so that the blueberries we used to pick up there as kids can grow again.

Community gardens

Sheds for recreation, greenhouses

Reroute the Monadnock Sunapee Trail through the property

Should there be campsites and porta potties?
What should we name trails? Name the whole piece?

Q: will this come up at town meeting?

A: No

As kids our parents hit candy up on Hurd Hill disguised as rocks. We called it Big Rock Candy Mountain

Geo caching, orienteering classes

Horseback riding

Some areas should be preserved for animals. Are there species that would benefit from this?

Bird blinds

Educational opportunities

Q: Are the abutters in support?

A: several who were present said "Yes" with enthusiasm.

We should have regular progress reports as things develop.

Maybe if we do this well, another Sydney Partridge will donate a fund

Support wrapping this up and dealing with details like specific costs later. They are small issues.

Beautiful piece of property. "Don't sweat the small stuff now."

Incredible Gift!

Kathy closed the meeting to applause at 8:12

Rick Church

Secretary