

Tri-Town Conservation Commission Summit Report

Sponsored by Eastman Charitable Foundation

The Center at Eastman

February 10, 2017

Enfield: Shirley Green, Alan Strickland, J.H. Thies, MD

Grantham: Richard Hocker, Laura Nagy, Dennis Ryan, Dave Wood

Springfield: Bruce Allen, Pat Shaw Allen, Cynthia Bruss

ECF: Ron Carr, Heddy Fantl, Shirley Green, Ebba McArt, Shawn Phelps, George Sutherland, Joe Watts, Jeanne West.

Moderator: Shawn Phelps, ECF President

The meeting opened with a brief slide presentation by Trustee Ron Carr. He described the key results of the 2016 ECF Eastman Pond Shoreline Study. Attendees were directed to the Foundation's web site to view the full report. Following the presentation, the Commissioners responded to the questions listed below.

1) What is your current top priority?

Enfield

- They are looking at goals for 2017. One possibility is a watershed study of Crystal Lake. It's still pristine, but there are storm water issues.
- There is interest in exploring vernal pools.
- A major conservation project was completed in 2016, the Harris Brook Scenic Area in Canaan. A problematic site was converted into a nature reserve with assistance and support from abutters and volunteers. Trails were developed, bridges were constructed and a parking lot was added at a cost of \$5,000. Usage of the site is up.
- New CC members are needed to replace others who have left.

Grantham

- The most important issue is preserving open space. There are large properties that are not permanently conserved. The Town needs to convince community members that open space is valuable.
- Corbin Park (a private preserve) represents a large section of the open space, 27,000 acres. About ¼ of the area lies within Grantham. Fences keep wildlife in/out, fragmenting the open space.
- The Town was successful in buying additional property to expand Brookside Park and making it accessible, thanks in part to a Byrne Foundation grant procured by Commissioner Nagy. The Park has a new trail, easy access and site information; 1,400 people have visited since it opened in 2016.
- They hope to expand on the Brookside Park model in the future, including creating an interpretive trail on the Smith lot. Likewise, the nearby Sherwood Forest and Town Forest on Miller Pond Road have potential.
- The Upper Valley Trails Alliance has a trails resource web site (Trail Finder) that combines trail information from NH, VT, MA and ME; it can be downloaded to a smartphone. The CC is planning to add Grantham trails to the web site.

Springfield

- The CC has seven members. They are looking for new replacements for members who have served multiple terms.
- The current priority is managing the Town lot of about 350 acres. There is an issue with snowmobile trails on the lot in spite of posted signs.

- A management plan for the Town Forest is needed, including timber sales. Timber logging trespasses have occurred in border areas.
- Work is being done to contain knotweed and buckthorn invasive species in another area (Kinsley lot).

2) What strategies do you have in place to fund conservation activities, including protection of open space?

Enfield

- Outreach and personal contacts, small donations and possible grants.
- The Commission receives a small conservation budget each year from the Town.
- The CC donated \$2,000 to the Upper Valley Land Trust to help purchase 995 acres of land on Shaker Mountain. The area connects two large parcels owned by NH Fish and Game to create a contiguous forest block of over 5,000 acres, including the 63 acre Smith Pond.
- Current funds don't allow for creating a forest management plan (average cost \$5,000) in another area of interest in Enfield.

Grantham

- The CC has substantial funding. The Town allows some of its forests to be logged with proceeds going to the CC.
- 100% of the tax incurred when owners remove property from "current use status" goes to the CC.
- State funding through LCIP (Land Community Heritage Investment Program) is a potential future source.
- A Town warrant article to issue bonds may be considered.
- An Open Space Committee was formed three years ago and has completed its work. The committee inventoried Town properties of 10+ acres, detailing attributes with significance for preserving rural character and supporting wildlife habitat.

Springfield

- Funding for conservation is limited. They are hoping that the Town will contribute some funds in the future. There is logging potential on 2 lots in the Town Forest, however, this has not yet been pursued. A major obstacle is that the Town Forest is land-locked and access is through private property.

3) Do you do community outreach (educational/school activities, volunteer work)?

Enfield

- Education activities have been in place the last 5 years, including Town hikes with education about the land.
- There have been talks twice/year on birds, river habitat, bears, storm water runoff, fuel for the body when hiking, and other topics with speakers from various agencies and organizations.

Grantham

- The development of Brookside Park involved a large number of volunteers of all ages.
- Education activities include sponsoring talks. A snowshoe hike is planned in the Town Forest in March.
- The CC is collaborating on a Little Free Library project.

Springfield

- Education is high on the agenda.
- The Commission sponsors 1-2 educational presentations per year (bald eagles, loons, etc).
- They sponsor hikes on Town land.
- On Olde Home Day, they have a tradition of giving away crabapple trees.

- While the Town had a Kindergarten class (it was moved to New London), they had a very popular outdoors project working with the teachers and the students.

4) Do you foresee any opportunities to work on joint Town Commission projects?

Enfield

- They are open to collaborating with others.

Grantham

- They are interested in collaborating on trail mapping.

Springfield

- They would be interested in a forest health program, including firewood issues. Traps have not been effective with the Emerald Ash Borer. The purple panel traps use a chemical lure that smells like an injured tree to EAB. Alternative traps – green panel and funnel traps use chemical and pheromone lures and they are more effective. An alternative approach is using a bio-monitor. In NH we have a native ground nesting wasp, *Cerceris planipennis*, that parasitizes beetles from the buprestid family, or metallic wood boring beetles. EAB is a member of this family. A colony is monitored by catching wasps when they return to the nest. If 50 prey are caught without catching an EAB it is assumed that they are not in the area. EAB colonies in Bristol and Rumney have been monitored this way.

Concluding recommendations.

There is interest in continuing to hold joint Conservation Commission meetings every 2-3 years. There was consensus to use the Eastman Charitable Foundation web site www.ecfnh.org as a tool for posting the following information:

- The names and terms of the Town Commissioners.
- Annual Conservation Commission reports.
- Upcoming activities sponsored by the Conservation Commissions.
- The Conservation Commission Summit Report.

Submitted by
Ebba W. McArt
2/15/17