

**Summary of Open Space Work Session**  
**January 31, 2011**  
**CONSERVATION COMMISSION**  
**Approved at the Tuesday April 12, 2011 Meeting**

**PRESENT**- Dean Anson, Chair, Marnie Schulz Leslie Thompson, Debra Williams, Lisa Morin Tobias Paddock and Hillary May

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Carol Andrews, Moderator, New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions (NHACC), Tom Howe, Senior Director of Land Conservation, Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF), Dan Sundquist, Director of Conservation Planning, SPNHF.

**Belknap County Towns Represented:** New Hampton, Meredith, Belmont, Gilford, Gilmanton, and Laconia.

**LAND PRESERVATION COMMENTS:**

Mark Billings, Meredith, indicated the Page Pond and Forest is their area of focus resulting from development pressures.

Nancy Mitchell, Gilmanton had concerns about targeting specific parcels and the right to no law.

Ken Knolton & Rick Ball, Belmont Con Com, said his Town experienced high growth during the good economic times necessitating the need to preserve and protect a valuable river corridor.

Ralph Kercher, New Hampton, described the difficulty to monitor large numbers of easements

Dean Anson, Laconia Conservation Commission, indicated Laconia has been able to steer developers in the direction of easement and open space preservation but he was here tonight to listen to what strategies have been put in place in other communities an easement prospect into a finalized easement on file at the Registry of Deeds.

**RECOMMENDED STRATEGY:**

Carol Andrews cited the following strategies cities and towns should follow to preserve land:

- Make sure you have a Natural Resource section in your communities Master Plan.
- Complete a Natural Resources Inventory to determine areas to focus on in the community
- Complete a Conservation Plan which should include the following:

- Co- occurrence map
- A Criteria to Follow
- Procedures to accomplish your goals

### **Here is an example of a Conservation Plan strategy from Sanford Maine:**

(NOT PART OF THE WORK SESSION)

The Conservation Plan outlines goals and strategies for achieving open space and resource protection in the natural areas and working landscapes of Sanford. Developed by members of the Sanford and Springvale community with help from regional conservation partners, the Plan addresses conservation goals identified in the Sanford Comprehensive Plan.

#### **How was the Conservation Plan developed?**

During the spring and summer of 2008, the Town of Sanford hosted a series of workshops designed to bring community stakeholders together, to share visions for the future of Sanford, and to craft a plan for realizing those visions. The workshops utilized Community Viz, a GIS planning tool for visualizing conservation scenarios.

#### **How will the Conservation Plan be used?**

The Conservation Plan will guide the protection of the values that natural places and open space provide, like clean water, farmland, wildlife habitat, flood control, and natural beauty. The culmination of the project is the written Plan, along with recommendations for its implementation, presented to the town planning board and ultimately amended to the Comprehensive Plan with the approval of the residents of Sanford.

#### **Other Thoughts:**

Some Towns add land acquisition to their Capital Improvement Program (CIP) initiated by the Planning Board.

Some Towns believe using current use funding to hire consultants is not appropriate because the dollars available are minimal and should be used for purchasing easements only.

How the project is presented to the public will partially determine if the owner goes forward with the easement.

The Sanborn Farm in Gilmanton is a priority site.

Planning Boards sometimes feel protected areas should be separated from developable areas.

The Lakes Region Planning Commission has been a good partner with Meredith and New Hampton

Hiring a consultant to assist a city or town with a successful approach to land acquisition may be appropriate:

- NHCONSERVATIONREALESTATE.COM is run by Tom Howard and is based out of Moultonborough.

Some small towns acquire 2,600 acres of easements creating the need for staff or others to assist them in meeting the requirements of the easement.

If you truly want to make open space acquisition a priority Conservation Commissions need to present the benefit of acquiring open space and make a good case to the City Council or Board of Selectmen.

Web sites are effective tools to promote the importance of land acquisition.

One individual suggested spending money on a billboard to bring attention to the need to preserve open space.

We need to sell the general public on the idea of keeping property out of development because it saves money on road maintenance, police and fire protection, and the need to construct additional public facilities.

A suggestion to work with the snowmobile club to protect trail linkage was made. Old Railroad corridors are also popular trail linkage opportunities. Snowmobile clubs do a great job to maintain trails.

**Next Meeting :**

The group was pleased to meet again after March 1, 2011. Hard copies of open space maps of from each community should be brought to the next meeting to determine possible linkage opportunities.