



# CONSERVATION COMMISSION

PO Box 120

Windham, New Hampshire 03087

(603) 432-3806 / Fax (603) 432-7362

www.WindhamNewHampshire.com

## Conservation Commission

### Minutes

November 15, 2007

Dr. James Finn – Chairman  
Mr. Bruce Breton – Vice-Chairman  
Mr. Bernie Rouillard – Secretary  
Dr. Bruce Anderson – Member  
Miss Pamela Skinner – Member (Excused)  
Mr. Chris Rossetti – Member (Excused)  
Mr. Dennis Senibaldi – Member  
Mr. Wayne Morris – Alternate

The Conservation Commission attended a meeting with the Recreation Committee, Dr. Bass, School Superintendent and Mr. Letizio, Chairman of the School Board.

It was agreed that Dr. Finn would chair the joint meeting.

Mr. Al Letizio, Chairman of the School Board, explained that he & Dr. Bass were before the Recreation Committee on behalf of the School Board to get some input regarding a solution of the situation of the shortage of athletic fields at the new high school. The Athletic Committee, upon review, came to the conclusion that what is being offered did not meet the minimum requirements of what should be at Windham High School. The existing fields did not support several of the sports. The Athletic Committee, an advisory committee to the School Board, came to the School Board with a concept of what WHS should have and the Board adopted that concept. The Engineering Team was asked to look at how to incorporate the recommendations of these fields and facilities into the site plan. What was being looked at was a second gym, a multi-purpose athletic facility, additional baseball field and an additional softball field and there has been discussion of a field for field hockey. The Engineering Team came back with alternatives. The Windham Middle School and associated fields will be on this site as well. The recommended fields for the high school could not be placed on the parcel as it exists. One of the recommendations was to use contiguous land, which is recreational conservation land known as The Gage Lands. The School Board voted to have Mr. Letizio and Dr. Bass meet with the Conservation Commission and the Recreation Committee and ask if the group would be agreeable to the possible use of that property. This would involve up to 16 acres. There is other school district property that could be offered in a trade. The School Board would like to have a sense from the group of what the possibility is to utilizing some of that land.



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Mr. Rouillard said that he has heard the pitch several times for the expanded athletic facility. He walked the site, although he is not enthusiastic about the prospect of giving up conservation land, he does think the proposal makes sense regarding having the facility close to the parking lot as well as having the field close to the high school itself. Mr. Rouillard went on to say that he is open to the idea of a trade to compensate for the loss of conservation land.

Mr. Morris said he had a procedural question. He feels there should be a request from the Board of Selectmen to both the Conservation Commission and the Recreation Committee to give their opinions. We seem to be a step ahead of where we should be. If this goes to town vote it would be the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen on the ballot whether to transfer this land. Mr. Morris said the request should be coming from the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Breton said the School Board will take the input from this meeting and present it to the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Letizio said before going to the Board of Selectmen, the School Board would like advice and input before making their decision. Once the School Board makes a decision they would then go to the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Valentine said that he feels it needs to boil up from Recreation and Conservation. In 1978 Article actually put The Gage Lands to the stewardship of the Conservation Commission and Recreation Committee. The article stated that it was to authorize Conservation and Recreation to supervise such uses.

Mr. Letizio said that it is the responsibility of the School Board to develop a master plan to show how the site should look when it is developed.

Mr. Morris said that he spoke with Margaret Case who made the motion back in 1978 and asked if when recreation was discussed was their talk about fields. Mrs. Case said the area was to be kept for walking, hiking, cross country skiing etc. In the context of 1978, it was a whole different ballgame then it is today.

Mr. Morris was told by Mr. Hatem that there is no room for bleachers around the soccer and practice football fields. Mr. Morris said that would be the deal breaker in regard to making this a football stadium if it cannot fit bleachers.

Dr. Anderson gave the following numbers that were provided by the Athletic Committee. The number of teams at Salem High School are 22 Fall Teams, 17 Winter Teams and 9 Spring Teams. Windham is proposing 26 Fall Teams, 19 Winter Teams and 16 Spring



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Teams. Dr. Anderson said that he is trying to understand the demand. You need 1100 seats on teams and WHS is going to open with 700-800 students and there are currently 410 students participating in sports.

Dr. Bass said that after checking with other towns with relatively the same numbers as Windham he was told these other towns were able to man every varsity and junior varsity team and are now introducing freshman programs.

Dr. Anderson said that Pelham has 19 Fall Teams, 12 Winter Teams and 12 Spring Teams compared to Windham's 26 in the Fall, 19 Winter and 16 Spring Teams.

Dr. Bass said there are many programs on the docket; you might have skiing, swimming, ice hockey and a variety of other sports. We are concerned about sports that have field impact.

Mr. Morris said going back to the original proposal of 8.2 acres, perhaps no one has thought in terms of upgrading the trails that are there and make it an area for cross country running.

Dr. Finn said that everything that was discussed is hypothetical and that there are too many variables. He would like to see the 113 acres that the school has progress thru a normal development process before saying we need all of these things. Let us see the plan go forward in a reasonable and rational fashion.

Mr. Letizio said the best way right now to deal with the situation is to agree upon a master plan and set aside for now the discussion as to when we are going to ask the taxpayers for something. The topic of the next School Board meeting will be the master plan. Mr. Letizio respectfully asked for a vote from both the Conservation Commission and the Recreation Committee.

Mr. Shane Pelletier asked if there is a preliminary sketch that he could look at.

Mr. Charlie McMahon said that he fought against the purchase of that land. The Town voted for it and now we have to live with it. It is not conservation land it is town property. It makes sense to use The Gage Lands because it would cost a lot less to develop it. The solution cries out for support.

Mr. Joe Sharon asked if the land was never deeded to the Conservation Commission. Mr. Valentine said that protocol would have you come to the Conservation Commission and Recreation Commission for their comments before going to the Board of Selectmen and then it would go to Town vote.



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Mr. Rouillard motioned and Mr. Morris seconded the motion that the Conservation Commission is open to the concept of further continued discussion with the School Board regarding a proposal to swap Conservation/Recreation land, i.e. The Gage Lands, for school land to facilitate the expansion of the high school athletic program. The proposal considered should be more than a 2 for 1 swap and disrupted trail systems on the Gage Lands should be re-established as part of the proposal. Motion passed 3-1-2. Mr. Rouillard, Mr. Morris and Mr. Breton voted for the motion. Dr. Finn voted against the motion. Dr. Anderson and Mr. Senibaldi abstained.

Dr. Finn agreed to write a letter stating the motion and vote.

The Conservation Commission Members had a brief discussion regarding the following issues on the Dolly Anderson parcel:

1. Sign Down
2. Continued Trespassing
3. Tax Dispute

Dr. Finn said that he spoke with Mr. Rex Norman regarding the tax dispute. This is a stand alone parcel separate from conservation land. Mr. Senibaldi said that he would check with Mr. McCartney regarding the sign.

Mr. Morris motioned and Mr. Breton seconded the motion to adjourn. Motion passed unanimously.

These minutes are in draft form and are respectfully submitted for approval by Patricia Kovolyan.

The next meeting of the Conservation Commission is scheduled for December 13, 2007 at 7:30 PM in the Planning & Development Office.