

Town of Randolph

Conservation Commission

Minutes of October 20, 2022

Members Present: Gary Newfield, Jennifer Barton-Scaranza, Walter Graff, Nathan Peters, Philip Guiser, Michele Cormier (Selectman's Representative)

Members Excused: None

Public: Jonathan Sisson and Brandy Capozello

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:19 by Gary Newfield

Wildlife Crossing

Gary Newfield stated that a wildlife crossing under Route 2 has been proposed by Brad Meiklejohn. Newfield advised that there are several culverts in the Bowman area and the two west of Bowman have the potential height to make the project feasible. NHDOT needs the support of the Conservation Commission before proceeding. Newfield asked if the Selectboard had discussed the proposal yet and was advised they have not, they were waiting on the Forest Commission and Conservation Commission. A concern was brought up about who was going to pay for the maintenance, and they were advised that NHDOT has stated the long-term maintenance would not be the responsibility of the Town of Randolph. It was suggested that a letter to that effect be obtained from NHDOT. They will also need to be sure that funding is available. Jennifer Barton-Scaranza advised that federal money is available from 2022-2026, so there is potential funding, however she was not sure if they would fund a private project such as this. It was noted that NHDOT would put the application in for the funding, however Peter Steckler would be doing the application process. Walter Graff stated that the NH Audubon Society just received a grant for \$100,000 to continue study work. It was agreed that the first thing they need is an engineering study, as they may not have enough height, and they will not be raising the road or digging deeper. The current height may make or break the project. Barton-Scaranza asked if there was a plan for replacement of the culverts anyway, which was not known. It was noted that US Fish and Wildlife and the Wetlands Bureau would like to remove round culverts and replace them with bridges to allow for natural streams, which would be a benefit in doing this. A member asked what would lead the animals to this crossing, and asked if fencing would be needed. It was noted that in some projects in other areas of the county the forest area is trimmed to funnel animals to the area naturally. It was noted that on the side of the road with the WMNF, the Forest Service would have a say in whether a fence was allowed or not, it would also be an issue on the side with private property.

Phil Guiser made a motion to send a letter to NHDOT from the Conservation Commission in support of a study of a wildlife crossing on Route 2. The motion was seconded by Jennifer Barton-Scarinza.

It was suggested that the letter be sent on letterhead with contact information for the Conservation Commission. It was noted that this idea was originally presented in the 90's, but did not gain traction as nobody took the lead. Jennifer Barton-Scarinza shared concerns with NHDOT and future maintenance of the crossing, and asked if there was any significant feedback from them on long-term responsibilities. It was noted that the motion made was to support a study, not to support the wildlife crossing. It was suggested that the fact that motor vehicle collisions occur frequently on this stretch of road be included in the letter, and it was noted that it is included already. Barton-Scarinza noted that it is hard to support a project, with limited information of what it will encompass. It was noted that there will need to be involvement from US Fish and Wildlife and the Wetlands Bureau, as well as others.

So moved, the Conservation Commission voted to support sending a letter to NHDOT for a study of a wildlife crossing on Route 2.

Jennifer Barton-Scarinza asked if the work by Peter Steckler will be considered a thorough study, as there are a lot of unanswered questions. It was noted that this is the first of many steps, and it does no harm to do a study.

Invasive Species

A concern was shared with the Commission about invasive plants along the Moose River, especially Japanese Barberry along Carleton Brook under Route 2. It was suggested that the Commission come up with some ideas on how to control invasive species such as this. It was suggested that the Department of Agriculture be contacted for information on weed control and invasive species. It was also suggested that there may be funding available, possibly from the Randolph Foundation, to hire someone to do this. Gary Newfield advised he will get the contact information and follow-up on this. Nate Peters also suggested groups such as the NorthWoods Stewardship Center, which sends young adults to work on projects such as this. It was suggested that when best practices are known, that it be shared with the community for property owners to be able to use on their own property as well. Philip Guiser advised he would look into what other Conservation Commissions have done on this issue as well.

Adjournment: On a motion from Jennifer Barton-Scarinza, seconded by Philip Guiser, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:12 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Shelli Fortin

October 21, 2022