

# **Town of Randolph**

## **Conservation Commission**

**Minutes of April 18, 2024**

**Members Present:** Gary Newfield, Walter Graff, Brandy Capozello, Nathan Peters, Philip Guiser, Rick Fournier (Selectman's Representative)

**Members Excused:** Jennifer Scarinza

**Public:** William Demers, Shelli Fortin, Minutes Taker

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by Gary Newfield

### **Approval of Minutes**

**On a motion by Nathan Peters, seconded by Brandy Capozello, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes of November 15, 2023.**

### **Election of Officers**

**On a motion by Philip Guiser, seconded by Walter Graff, the Commission voted unanimously to appoint Gary Newfield as Chair.**

### **Wildlife Crossing**

Walter Graff provided an update on the proposed wildlife crossing on Route 2. Graff advised that the Forest Commission has sent a letter in favor of moving forward with the engineering study for the Wildlife Crossing at the Farrar Farm. The Farrar Farm was chosen as the best location for the crossing, and the bridge that will be installed for the crossing will allow it to be 15 feet high, 40 feet wide, and 35 feet long. It is not known what type of bridge will be used, as it is still in the planning stages. The Forest Commission noted in their letter that they will not be responsible for maintaining the wildlife crossing, and they will not allow fencing other than for safety. It has also been suggested that a trail under the road be included in the project. On the northern side, the crossing will be curved to the right toward the field to avoid the maple tap area. Trail cameras have been suggested and would need approval from the Forest Commission and the Conservation Commission. There is also an opportunity for an educational display at the Farrar Farm. Graff noted that although this area is not identified as a moose crossing, there are other animals that need to cross, and it will connect almost one million acres of forest from Kilkenny to the Northern Presidentials, which is healthy for the whole region. The cost has been estimated between \$4.5-\$6 million, and there is Federal Grant money available for the project that has been earmarked for wildlife crossings. There are other places in the country that have wildlife crossings, but not in New England.

When asked about the time frame, Graff advised he was not sure how long the engineering study would take. When asked about a public hearing, Graff advised that it would make sense after the engineering work is completed.

**On a motion by Philip Guiser, seconded by Brandy Capozello, the Commission voted unanimously to support the wildlife crossing with the information that they currently have.**

### **Public Comments**

William Demers stated he was opposed to the project, as although it is Federal money, it is still our money and is wasteful. Mr. Demers noted that the last moose study was in 2006, and there should be a new one done. Mr. Demers noted failed attempts by Eversource to protect salmon at the hydro dams, and millions of dollars were spent on projects that did not work.

Walter Graff noted that there have been mistakes made with some projects, however we are learning. Graff noted the importance of connecting the land. Graff also shared that moose have been seen using the tunnel under the road by Great Glen, which is a heavily used public area. Graff did note that the outdated data did come up in previous discussions, and the wildlife biologist stated that the habitat is still there even though the moose population has declined. Nate Peters noted that they do have wildlife cameras in Kilkenny and have seen lots of moose. Rick Fournier noted that based on the moose study by Fish and Game, the number of permits issued each zone has decreased.

Rick Fournier asked if the Farrar Farm location was chosen as the best spot or for convenience, and was advised that it was chosen because on the south side they have the room for the 15 feet of clearance without digging and it is Town Forest property. The Bowman area would have required raising the road to get the height needed.

### **Japanese Knotweed**

Gary Newfield stated that he spoke with Joel White, who is willing to come show homeowners what to do to eradicate it, and who shared information on someone available to spray along Durand Road. It is a complicated process and sometimes requires a second treatment. Newfield noted that the Conservation Commission does have money in their budget that they could put towards this project. Nate Peters noted that his concern is that the knotweed is already in all of the culverts and in the Moose River, so the damage has been done. Walter Graff noted that the Forest Commission has also been looking at this issue on the Farrar Farm and they may be able to coordinate. Graff will bring this issue to them at their next meeting.

**Adjournment: On a motion from Gary Newfield, seconded by Brandy Capozello, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 6:49 pm.**

Respectfully submitted,

Shelli Fortin

April 19, 2024