



Mason Conservation Commission Minutes

Mar. 27, 2019
7:00 pm to 8:20 pm

In Attendance

- Barbara DeVore
- Bob Dillberger
- Anna Faiello
- Liz Fletcher
- Bob Larochelle
- Lundy Lewis
- Rosanna Nadeau
- Matt Robinson-Liu

The Conservation Commission convened a special meeting to discuss matters related to the purchase of B-4-2. This project is formally named the "Spaulding Brook Headwaters Project" and is managed by a committee formed for this purpose, The Spaulding Brook Headwaters Project Committee (SBHPC).

SBHPC chair Bob D. presented the following items for consideration:

1. On 3/22, Barbara and Bob D. met with Chris Wells and Tom Jones of Piscataquog Land Conservancy (PLC, in New Boston). At the meeting, Chris (who has served on the LCHIP board) told us he thinks we (i.e., the Town of Mason) need to contribute more money toward the project or risk having our application dismissed out of hand by (at least) LCHIP. Chris quoted the number 25% as the amount he recommends we contribute. The SBHPC came up with two possible sources of additional money: timber harvest on existing conservation land, and donation from the Forestry Committee.

Is the CC willing to work toward contributing more money? If so, what source(s) of money should we pursue?

Yes, the CC will increase it's contribution. Rough analysis suggests we can raise around \$100,000 from our accounts (including recent LUCT money that is not yet credited to our accounts). Bob L. will contact Bill Downs about a possible timber harvest to raise additional money. The Forestry Committee is not an option because their money can't be used for land acquisition.

2. At the 3/22 meeting, we learned from Chris that we can "sweeten the deal" by including other conservation land as a match as long as the total budget includes the value of the donated land (or the value of an easement on the land).

Shall the CC authorize the SBHPC to pursue the contribution of other town-owned lands to be used as matching funds for the B-4-2 project?

Yes, let's pursue this option. Bob D. will contact Chris at PLC to get clarification on the accounting associated with expected land gifts that the Town does not yet own.

3. Also at the 3/22 meeting, we learned that PLC might be interested in partnering with us on this project. If we choose that arrangement, PLC will do most of the work of acquiring funding (they'll write the grant applications, hire experts, etc.) and completing the purchase for a charge of \$12,600 on condition that PLC is the easement holder on the property. If we choose to pursue this arrangement, the PLC board of directors will still need to review the project and make a final decision.

Is the CC interested in pursuing this arrangement? Will the CC authorize the SBHPC to pursue it?

We tentatively agreed this arrange is worth pursuing. However, several questions arose about details of the arrangement. Bob D. will contact Chris to get more information so we can discuss this matter further at our regularly scheduled meeting in April.

4. Before buying a property the CC must (1) get BOS permission and (2) hold a public hearing.

Shall the CC convene a public hearing w.r.t. the purchase of B-4-2? When/where shall we hold the hearing?

It's not clear if a hearing is truly required (Bob D. couldn't remember where he read about it) but all agreed it's a good idea regardless. We decided to schedule a public hearing as part of our regularly scheduled meeting in May.

5. If we decide not to pursue the PLC partnership described in Item 3, the SBHPC will need authorization to request estimates and bids from contractors to do some required tasks: dam removal, wetlands study, Phase 1 environmental site assessment (looking for potential hazardous waste), and appraisal.

Shall the CC authorize the SBHPC to perform these activities on the CC's behalf? Note that if we pursue the PLC partnership, this authorization will probably be moot.

The CC authorized the SBHPC to perform the activities described. Any estimates or bids collected will be presented to the CC for discussion and final hiring choice. Also, we agree that since dam removal is a unique operation, it's prudent to prepare an RFP for this activity. The SBHPC will prepare an RFP and present it to the CC for review before soliciting bids.