

**Carlisle Conservation Commission**  
**March 14, 2013**

Pursuant to the notice filed with the Town Clerk, Chair Kelly Guarino called the meeting to order in the Clark Room at the Town Hall at 7:35 p.m. Also present were Vice Chair Luke Ascolillo and Commissioners Tom Brownrigg, Peter Burn, Jen Bush and Lee Tatistcheff and Conservation Administrator Sylvia Willard. Commissioner Tom Brown was not present.

**Bills, General Agenda Items & New/Pending or Old Business:**

**Minutes:**

*Brown moved to accept the February 14, 2013 minutes as amended, Bush seconded and all voted in favor with the exception of Guarino, who abstained.*

**Foss Farm Agricultural Proposal:** Ken Grady of 981 Bedford Road had requested time on the agenda for an informal discussion relative to his interest in leasing some of the town-owned Foss Farm land for agricultural use. The purpose of the discussion was to obtain some initial feedback from the Commission relative to potential impacts and/or concerns. He is proposing to lease one to two acres of land that is contiguous to his property for planting grain (sorghum, barley) and/or some small complimentary livestock use in exchange for clearing and maintenance work. He noted that much of the unused land on the town side of the river has grown up with scrub and invasives and would therefore require a season or two to prepare it for agricultural use.

Guarino noted that the Commission currently has no process for reclaiming agricultural land that is within their jurisdiction. She requested a written proposal from Grady so that the Commission and the Land Stewardship Committee can give it further consideration. Bush said she is generally in support of the proposal and that she would like to conduct a site visit of the area he is considering. Burn raised the point that the purchase of Foss Farm involved Federal and State funding as well as town funding, which could complicate matters, but overall reclaiming the land is good. Tatistcheff noted that because the land he is proposing for agricultural use is contiguous to his property, he would not need to build an access road or install irrigation well. LSC member Debby Geltner said it is important to look at the land and be sure we want to turn it back into agricultural land, as clearing land can be quite a disturbance environmentally. She also noted that the Commission would be required to offer the agricultural agreement through a public bidding process should they decide to move forward with the initiative.

Guarino said that one of the issues the Commission has wanted to focus on is to address the state of the fields under their jurisdiction, some of which have become unusable, therefore this proposal may fit in nicely within their desire to reclaim some of these fields. She requested that Grady submit a detailed written proposal to be reviewed by the Commission and LSC.

**Unauthorized Cranberry Bog Trail:** Guarino raised the issue of an unauthorized trail at the Cranberry Bog that had been discussed at a recent Cranberry Bog Joint Town Committee meeting in Chelmsford. Photographs of the trail were provided by Debby Geltner of the Land Stewardship Committee (LSC). The Town of Chelmsford's previous attempts to close off the trail were unsuccessful so they have created a subcommittee to deal with the issue. At this point they would like create an alternative trail, as the current trail follows the waters edge causing erosion concerns and interfering with sensitive wildlife habitat. The Chelmsford subcommittee has requested assistance from the Town of Carlisle, possibly from the Trails Committee and/or LSC, to permanently reroute the trail and to install educational signage. The subcommittee will be attending an upcoming Trails Committee meeting to address the details of working with the Town of Carlisle to address the issue.

**8:00 p.m. Conservation Land Agricultural Farmers' Meeting, Continued:** Mark Duffy provided a summary Land Use Reports and Land Use Planning Forms for the following properties:

**Cranberry Bog:** The yield is up and down, better this past season than two years ago, but not as good as last year due to weather conditions. **Upper Foss Farm:** He plans to raise hay in this field with the hope they will have better luck than they have with corn. Traditionally in the past he has planted mixed grasses for hay fields, but plans to try clear seeding with alfalfa as it may do better in dry conditions and makes excellent feed due to its high protein level. He said he appreciates the edge clearing work done by Cook Company as it will allow him to use more area of the field. **Lower Foss Farm:** He is hoping for a wet spring, with plans to keep the wet part of Foss in corn and hay in the dryer area; **Robbins & Hutchins Fields:** He plans to seed a new crop depending on soil conditions; **Fisk Meadow:** It's a small field he has been working for the last several years and plans to continue to keep in corn; **Greenough:** He seeded all of Greenough and it is now all in hay, which takes time to establish; the majority of Greenough is too wet for alfalfa so he will continue using mixed grasses.

Guarino asked if there are any issues at the Cranberry Bog he wished to discuss. He said there are always going to be issues related to dog walking, he is a big fan of people using the property and he appreciates the public support he receives for the use of the Bog.

Guarino said the Commission really wants to do a better job of maintaining the fields that are under their jurisdiction and reclaiming those that have become overgrown. They are looking at other fields to consider for mechanical field edge clearing similar to what was done last year at Foss Farm. She asked Duffy if there are any other fields that he would recommend for the next round of edge clearing. He said that an awful lot of land is consumed by brush at the field edges, but did not identify a specific location. Tatistcheff noted that some of the agricultural licensees have discussed their efforts to keep the field edges back and asked whether he has been able to spend any time on this effort. Duffy said he did not have the appropriate equipment to completely clear the edges but that traditionally they work to provide sufficient clearance for their equipment.

**8:40 p.m. Carlisle Agricultural Commission Warrant Article:** Leslie Thomas and Judy Asarkoff were present to request the Commission's support of the proposed Warrant Article to ask the Town to vote to establish an Agricultural Commission in Carlisle to represent the Agricultural/Farming Community, including Hobby Farming, in Carlisle.

The purpose of the Carlisle Agricultural Commission (AC) will be to represent the agricultural interests of the farming community in town. The AC would develop a work plan to guide activities including but not limited to: encouraging the continued pursuit of agriculture in Carlisle; promoting agricultural based economic opportunities in Town; mediating, advocating, educating and/or negotiating of farming issues; working for the preservation of agricultural lands and pursuing all initiatives appropriate to retaining farming in Carlisle.

Thomas and Asarkoff said they had conducted several informal discussion groups and, based on the level of interest, decided to pursue establishing a formal commission. They contacted Cheryl Lekstrom from the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF), who provided assistance to the group in determining how to write and present the Warrant Article. If adopted, the AC would receive automatic membership with the MFBF and would become eligible for grants and other funding opportunities and well as guidance on legal concepts. The AC will consist of five Carlisle residents, appointed by the BOS, with at least 3 members being actively engaged in farming. They would not have statutory authority, but would provide a forum for farmers' and citizens' concerns relative to agriculture in Carlisle. They are aware of the requirements of the Open Meeting Law, and have been given permission to hold their public meetings at Union Hall.

Guarino asked the presenters how they might interact with the Conservation Commission in terms of managing the conservation lands they offer for agricultural agreements. Thomas said they have not thought about that yet, but hope to learn more as they go forth and could perhaps determine areas where they could be of assistance to the Commission. Asarkoff noted that being pro agriculture does not mean being oblivious to other concerns. *Tatistcheff moved to support the establishment of an Agricultural Commission in Carlisle through the proposed Warrant Article, Burn seconded and all voted in favor.*

**8:55 p.m. 776 East Street, MGL Chapter 61A Withdrawal:**

At their previous meeting, the Commission determined that they should seek legal advice in order to determine what actions, if any, are required on their part in light of the fact that the property is being removed from MGL Chapter 61A status, but is not being put on the market.

Guarino said there had been a fair amount of confusion over the issue because the Commission had been asked to provide the BOS with a recommendation relative to the potential Town purchase and use of the property prior to the announcement that the property was not being proposed for development or for sale. It was not until after the Commission conducted a site visit that they were made aware of the fact that there would be no change in the current use of the property.

Willard reported having researched the recommended procedures associated with the situation through the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions (MACC). It is her understanding based on that research that the Town of Carlisle has no Right of First Refusal unless the property is marketed for/proposed for development by the owners within one year of removal from Chapter 61A status. She presented the Commission with a draft memo outlining these findings which, with the exception of several minor edits, was approved for submission to the Board of Selectmen.

The memo also included information relative to the habitat /open space value of the parcel. Because the property is less than 10 acres, it has not been rated for acquisition or for protection in the town's OS&R Plan. Nonetheless, the memo states the fact that the Humm property meets the majority of these criteria as follows: core habitat; active recreation (potential); rural vista; linking location (Town Forest), connection to trails (Town Forest); prime or active agricultural land; diversity of habitat; and level of development (5 of 7 acres are open). In light of this information, the ConsCom recommends that the BOS clearly understand the 61A procedures in a case such as this in order to make a definitive decision should the property become available.

*Burn moved to forward the memorandum as edited, Tatistcheff seconded and all voted in favor.*

**Elliott Preserve Update:** Willard reported that she had obtained a quote from The Foster Company for an update to the appraisal for the Elliott Property, as the current appraisal will expire as of April 11, 2013. The town is required to get a formal reappraisal in order to demonstrate that the current value of the property is greater than or equal to the purchase price in accordance with the provisions for using CPC funding for a portion of the purchase. The Commission confirmed that the \$1,400 reappraisal fee will be covered with a portion of the previously approved Elliott Preserve purchase contribution from the Conservation Fund.

**Town Forest and Hurricane Sandy Tree Damage:**

Land Stewardship Committee Chair Debby Geltner reported on the site visit conducted on March 4, 2013 with Massachusetts State Forester Laura Dooley, LSC member Liz Carpenter and Conservation Administrator Willard. The purpose of the visit was to review the damage resulting from Hurricane Sandy in October, 2012 in order to provide recommendations relative to the fallen trees, many of which had fallen over trails. Geltner highlighted the major points made by Forester Dooley during the site visit including: blowdowns are a natural part of the forest cycle; one thing to think about is that it is light and open in there now and they will need to watch invasives and runoff near the wetland; there is a lot of biomass on forest floor which is not harmful to the environment, in fact it provides for wildlife habitat and will also improve soil nutrients; the increase in sunlight resulting from new openings in the forest canopy will slowly fill in with saplings.

Geltner said she has asked Dooley if it would make sense to bring someone in to cut up the downed trees for timber. Dooley did not recommend this, as she did not believe the knotty pine would be very valuable lumber. It is typically good for chipping, but it would be difficult to gain access for the required equipment.

Guarino asked if Dooley had any suggestions for better managing the land. Geltner said she had noted the areas where red pines are closely grouped together, posing the potential for disease/fungus killoff. Brownrigg noted the comment in the report relative to the fact that the current understory of trees, mostly oaks observed during site visit, will improve

in health and stature given the new increase in light and nutrients now available. He suggested this could be an opportunity to increase tree diversity by removing some of the small pines to allow other tree species to grow. Geltner said that the Land Stewardship Committee has discussed doing a forest survey. Guarino noted that the New England Forestry Foundation had done surveys in Carlisle in the past and there may be reports on file. Tatistcheff said the Commission often discusses land maintenance issues that need to be addressed but does not currently have a process in place. Burn noted that forestry management involves cutting trees so it is also a public education issue. The Commission will request that the Land Stewardship Committee complete a Forest Stewardship Plan, incorporating the information on file based on previous recommendations.

**Foss Farm Community Gardens Well:** Jack O'Connor was present to request approval for the purchase of an additional well for the Foss Farm Community Gardens in order to provide a symmetrical approach for irrigating the garden plots. A map of the garden plots was distributed highlighting several potential locations which could be added over the next few years depending on funding availability. The estimated \$1200 to \$1300 cost would be funded through the Foss Farm 53e.5 Revolving Account, which is comprised of annual garden plot fees. It was noted that the BOH will need to approve the installation of the additional well, which should not be an issue because the proposed locations are farther away from farm fields than those installed in previous years. *Burn moved to approve the purchase and installation of an additional well for the Foss Farm Community Gardens in the location noted on the plot plan, Tatistcheff seconded.*

Guarino suggested the possibility of sending out an appeal to gardeners for contributions in addition to the \$10 plot fees in order to increase funding for additional improvements. The suggestion will be given further consideration. *Tatistcheff moved to amend the motion to approve the purchase and installation of a new well with a limit of \$1,400, Burn seconded and all voted in favor of the amendment. With no further discussion, all voted in favor of the original motion with the exception of Bush, who abstained.*

**Office Purchase Request:** Willard requested approval to purchase an additional file cabinet. After a brief discussion of the status of the ConsCom General Fund budget, *Burn moved to approve the purchase a file cabinet for \$484 as quoted, Tatistcheff seconded and all voted in favor.*

**Hillside Drive Request:**

Willard requested guidance relative to a request for a tree removal project on Hillside Drive. She provided the Commission with a description of the location and a plan of the land from a previous filing. Given the fact that the tree removal did not qualify for an Emergency Certificate, the Commission asked Willard to inform the property owner that a filing will be required.

10:10 p.m. *Burn moved to adjourn, Bush seconded and all voted in favor.*

Respectfully submitted,  
Mary Hopkins  
Administrative Assistant