

**HOOKSETT CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
HEAD'S POND STEWARDSHIP PLAN PUBLIC HEARING  
Monday, November 9, 2020  
Hooksett Municipal Building  
Town Council Chambers**

Cindy Robertson called the public hearing to order at 6:00pm.

**Present:** Cindy Robertson-Chair, Phil Fitanides-Member, Deborah Miville-Member, Alex Walczyk- Town Council Representative, William Herlicka- Alternate

**Not Present:** JoCarol Woodburn-Member, David Ross-Vice Chair, Robert Better-Alternate, John Pieroni-Alternate,

**Staff:** Leann Fuller, Administrative Assistant

**Other:** Swift Corwin, Calhoun and Corwin Forestry, Steve Couture, Bear-Paw Regional Greenways Consultant

Cindy Robertson began the presentation. Cindy introduced herself, the Conservation Commission members, and Swift Corwin. The Conservation Commission had Moosewood Ecological and Calhoun and Corwin Forestry create the Stewardship plan. The Conservation Commission did review a draft of the Stewardship plan and commented on it. The School Board also had their chance to review the Stewardship plan and comment on it as a piece of property included in the Stewardship Plan is owned by the School District. The Head's Pond trail is the main portion of what people know about the property. These properties consist of 438 acres between the 4 parcels. The four parcels are known as Carriage Manor, Town Pond, University Heights, and the School District. These properties border Manchester Water Works and Bear-Paw conserved land in Clay Pond. The Clay Pond Conservation Area does connect to Bear Brook State Park.

Swift Corwin introduced himself and what his part of the Stewardship Plan was. Jeff Littleton's expertise is understanding the ecological systems and Swift's part is to quantify the forest and the resources. Swift's process is to study the maps and then walk properties in a grid and take a series of sample points and discover what the species and composition of the forest is and how it is being used. It is a very heavily used area. The trail brings a lot of people in from the Route 3 parking lot. Swift did not study the trail usage but every time he was out there, he encountered a lot of people. The trail is very well designed for that amount of traffic and beautiful especially with the full effect of the pond. There are a number of trails that go up the hill. They are not necessarily walking trails, it is being used by bikers, motorcycles, and four wheelers. The forest itself is a product of historical use. There are not many stone walls and not used as agricultural land. It is an old forest. The last time it was logged was about 30-40 years ago. The soil is not particularly fertile. The trees are healthy and full crowned, but it is not a dynamic forest. There is not a lot of white pine or black oak or species that are in the overstory coming into the understory replacing the forest as it sits but the overstory is perfectly healthy. Given the amount of usage on the property and the way people are walking through it and using it, Swift's recommendation was to not engage in a lot of active forest management like logging but manage the property for people and the trails. The tradeoff of doing this is that it will influence wildlife because of human traffic and the property. It is a valuable piece of property from a wildlife standpoint. There is also a bare sandy ground which is excellent breeding ground for turtles. Then as you move up the slope, the soils are very well drained which bears a lot of rock and ledge and drains fast. The upland area is primarily black oak and white

47 pine and that carries all the way to the west border. The west border is a new housing development. From a  
48 people management standpoint, the primary issue on this piece of property is to develop some rules for use  
49 and to figure out how the land is going to be used.

50  
51 Cindy Robertson clarified that this would take years. The estimated timeline provided was that in 2022, they  
52 hope to establish trails and trail maps. The goal for the public hearing is to look for input about how the  
53 property should be maintained. There is a strong interest in mountain bike trails in Hooksett. Rules are the  
54 first step. On other Conservation lands, motorized vehicles are not allowed as they cause damage to the land.  
55 That prohibition will continue on this property but again, we are looking for public input.

56  
57 **PUBLIC INPUT:**

58 *Comment #1:* Four wheeler and motorcycle use has increased, and it has driven away the wildlife. Barriers that  
59 were installed have been broken through.

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61 *Comment #2:* There was a statement made that this is the largest contiguous property in southern NH. Are  
62 there any similar towns that had this but lost it?

63 Swift Corwin answered that there used to be larger parcels in Southeastern NH.

64  
65 *Comment #3:* Since it is unique, when talking about the land and how the forest isn't growing back quickly and  
66 a trail is cut, the forest won't regenerate or recover quickly.

67 Swift Corwin concurred with that statement. Attention must be paid to the use that will have lasting impacts  
68 on the property.

69  
70 *Mike Horne, Kiwanis:* Back when Head's Pond trail was approved, the grant was under the condition that the  
71 Head's Pond trail will be non-motorized. That is on the trail itself.

72  
73 *Phil Fitanides, Conservation Commission Member,* asked what types of provisions there are for logging?  
74 Swift Corwin is not recommending logging. These properties seem to be more of a recreation area than an  
75 area where logging is appropriate. The forest is going to take care of itself as long as the soil is there. The soil  
76 must be protected.

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78 *Comment #5:* Fish and Game have concerns about mud holes being expanded.

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80 *Comment #6:* The tracks from motorized vehicles have become very deep. There is spray paint on rocks all the  
81 time, which is not attractive. It ruins pictures. There is probably increased shenanigans because of COVID. How  
82 can that be changed?

83 Cindy Robertson stated that spray paint is a tough subject to control.

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85 *Comment #7:* A main issue is dogs being leashed.

86 Cindy Robertson clarified that dogs are required to remain leashed on the trails. Swift also mentioned that it is  
87 provision on the sign.

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89 *Comment #8:* Where University Circle is there are barricades but no signage. The sooner the signs go up, the  
90 better.

91  
92 *Mike Horne, Kiwanis:* When Kiwanis received the trail rights, the rocks got moved by people. In the woods  
93 trail, the ruts are getting deeper and deeper.

94 *Comment #9: Who polices the area?*

95 Swift Corwin: That is a Hooksett problem.

96  
97 *Comment #10: Who polices the barriers?*

98 Swift Corwin clarified that it is a problem. It is important is to develop a policy for the property, how it is going  
99 to be used, who is going enforce it and make rules that can be enforced. There should be a group authorized  
100 to make those rules.

101  
102 *Comment #11: Doesn't state law say that you can't ride any and everywhere?*

103 Cindy Robertson is not an ATV rider and can't recite the rules, but riders are supposed to know whose land  
104 they are on. Swift Corwin added that signs are important. Cindy Robertson would like signs at the School  
105 property as there is a lot of activity there. Before signs are installed, policies must be created. Swift Corwin  
106 also recommended that property lines are marked. It can be confusing as to whose property it is out there.

107  
108 *Comment #12: Fish and Game have been policing it. They have been trying to catch them.*

109 Cindy Robertson clarified that most of the Conservation Easements do not permit motorized vehicles. The  
110 School property is a different story as that is up to them what they want to allow on their property. Swift  
111 Corwin recommends a sign saying, "The use of this property is under review, until further notice no motorized  
112 vehicles are permitted."

113  
114 *Comment #13: Quote state law on the signs regarding ATV use.*

115  
116 *Comment #14: Is there connectivity to the Bear Brook trails?*

117 Swift Corwin answered that there is a path on the east side of Head's Pond coming off of route 3, it is a gravel  
118 road and then off of that gravel road, there is a trail that goes to the east and goes all the way to Clay Pond  
119 area and then connects to bear brook.

120  
121 *Comment #15: Is that ATV accessible?*

122 Steve Couture, Bear-Paw Regional Greenways, answered No. The Town Council agreed that ATV's are not  
123 allowed on Chester Turnpike, State Properties, or Town properties.

124  
125 *Comment #16: Is that all motorized vehicles?*

126 Cindy Robertson clarified that in the Chester Turnpike area, it is referring to ATV's. Chester Turnpike turns into  
127 a Class VI road and it has been closed to ATV's. Vehicles can drive on Chester Turnpike as it is a road and there  
128 are residences out there. The conservation properties do not allow ATV use either.

129 Swift Corwin clarified that Clay Pond is a lot less intensively used. It is much more remote.

130 Phil Fitandides, Conservation Commission member, asked what restrictions there are for logging as that  
131 requires motorized vehicles.

132 Steve Couture clarified that it is a specified allowed activity.

133  
134 *Bill Herlicka, Conservation Commission Alternate, the Merrimack Riverwalk Trail required a plan and was built.*  
135 However, it never had a plan for mowing and this year, the Town saw the effects of that. Currently, the  
136 Conservation Commission is trying to create a plan to understand that aspect of the land. Is there something  
137 specifically important that should be looked at? This is a great opportunity to ask that.

138  
139 *Comment #17: What would maintenance involve?*

140 Swift Corwin hopes to avoid a situation where a lot of maintenance is to be done. If the ATV's stay off the  
141 property, maintenance will be minimal. If they remain out there, mediation will have to take place.  
142 Cindy Robertson mentioned that Kiwanis maintains the Head's Pond trail. Recently, they installed some extra  
143 gravel.

144  
145 *Comment #18:* Maintenance will be based on the use.

146 Cindy Robertson stated that the use will drive the maintenance of it. For instance, the Merrimack Riverwalk  
147 Trail was mowed on the sides by DPW to keep it wide.

148 Steve Couture specified that if Mountain Biking is being considered, then the Conservation Commission would  
149 have to consider who will create and maintain those trails. They are much different than hiking trails.

150 Swift Corwin clarified that the New England Mountain Bike Association has a model for trails.

151  
152 *Comment #19:* Is hunting allowed?

153 Cindy Robertson stated that hunting is allowed on Conservation land. The hunter must be licensed through NH  
154 Fish and Game, which requires they take a course and follow the rules.

155  
156 *Comment #20:* Will the haul road be eliminated?

157 Cindy Robertson stated no.

158  
159 *Comment #21:* There are a lot of trails in there.

160 Swift Corwin clarified that those are from residents making their own trails.

161  
162 *Comment #22:* Make sure it is accessible. There is no need for Mountain biking as Bear Brook has the best  
163 trails. Create some accessibility for fishing as it is a good hike to Head's Pond or out to Dube's Pond.

164  
165 *Comment #23:* How will the School property impact this?

166 Swift Corwin and Cindy Robertson did present the plan to the School Board. They couldn't wrap their head  
167 around it at the time. The property is useless to them.

168 Steve Couture clarified that the School property was part of the negotiations with Manchester Sand and  
169 Gravel when they were developing the plan for about 400 residential homes and Hooksett was sending  
170 children to Manchester. In the easement with Manchester Sand and Gravel, there is specific language for  
171 access. Without car access, there is not much that can be done for fishing access. To get to Dube's Pond from  
172 that end, crossing Manchester Sand and Gravel's property is required and that is prohibited.

173  
174 *Comment #24:* The land the School owns is landlocked?

175 Cindy Robertson stated that initially, when the Conservation Commission began looking at the properties, the  
176 School Board's biggest concern was liability. This property won't be the exact same, but it will be up to them  
177 to decide the policy for their property.

178 Steve Couture clarified that they may not realize they have a significant liability with ATV's being on their  
179 property.

180  
181 *Comment #25:* The best business practices is to stay consistent with all properties.

182 Swift Corwin mentioned that an action item talked about in the plan is to mark the property lines and come up  
183 with the appropriate rules at the trailheads. Cindy Robertson also stated that the Conservation Commission  
184 has discussed being consistent across all properties. The first step is to establish rules, mark properties and  
185 post signs.

187 *Comment #26: What is the next step?*  
188 Cindy Robertson reiterated that there needs to be rules and policies in place, signage installed, and boundaries  
189 marked. Then develop ideas and trails.  
190 Swift Corwin recommended a trail survey with game cameras. That will provide a feel for how much of a  
191 problem there is out there. First thing is to post the property lines and with rules.

192  
193 *Comment #27: Is there an issue with liability if residents decide to go out and try to fix some issues on the*  
194 *trails?*  
195 Steve Couture stated yes and no. The terms of the Conservation Easement must be met. There are specific  
196 requirements. If not done in the right way, legally, the Town is liable to fix it. It would be great to have a  
197 formal trail group, which happens in other communities then there would be projects identified.  
198 Cindy Robertson stated that everyone is volunteers and there are a lot of projects in town.

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200 Public hearing ended at 7:00pm.

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203 ***Minutes respectively submitted by***

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205  
206 ***Leann Fuller***  
207 ***Administrative Assistant***

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<b>Please see subsequent meeting minutes for any amendments to these minutes.</b>
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