MINUTES TO CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING – SOMERSWORTH, NH

June 11, 2014 Council Chambers – City Hall 7:00 PM
Attending: Liz Wilson, Dale Smith-Kenyon, Emilee Kenyon, Angela Ficco-Orzechowski, Frank Richardson, Jeremy Rhodes, Director of Planning and Community Development Dave Sharples

1) Approval of meeting minutes. Emilee Kenyon made a motion to accept the minutes of the May 8, 2014 meeting. Angela Ficco-Orzechowski seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

2) OLD BUSINESS. None.

3) NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion on dispersing funds for a membership with the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions. The Commission discussed the value of belonging to the organization versus paying for individual workshops. Liz Wilson made a motion not to renew the Commission's membership. Dale Smith-Kenyon seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

B. Crockett's Crossing is seeking a conditional use permit to install a solar photovoltaic array within the wetland buffer on property located at 445 Main Street. Henry Brant, owner of Crockett's Crossing, presented the concept of installing solar panels at the 30 acre property as he did during the May meeting. The panels would offset the electrical usage of the development through a net metering program. Dale Smith-Kenyon asked how much electricity will be generated. Mr. Brant responded that the array will likely produce approximately 90,000 kW annually, which exceeds estimates of current electrical use.

Panels are proposed for installation over a wetland area, because architectural features on homes, such as gables, prohibit installation on roofs. In addition, other areas of the property experience too much shade. NHDES has been contacted, and NHDES indicated that installation of panels over a wetland would likely be approved as long as the panels are not in the wetland. Pilings are proposed to be installed in the wetland buffer. If wetland plants are impacted by the array, shade tolerant, wetland species will be planted. Angela Ficco-Orzechowski asked how the Commission will verify that plantings are installed if needed. Frank Richardson indicated that percent vegetative cover is the important thing to consider, and shade tolerant species will likely migrate into the wetland. Frank Richardson suggested that a survey of existing vegetation can be completed now and evaluated for vegetation loss in a few years.

Dale Smith-Kenyon made a motion to recommend approval of the conditional use permit with a condition that the applicant provide an existing vegetative cover map and conduct an evaluation of vegetative cover after three growing seasons. If vegetative cover has been reduced by 15-25%, the applicant shall plant suitable wetland species to re-establish the vegetative cover. Angela Ficco-Orzechowski seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

C. Mast Point Dam Revitalization project update. The project is on hold until funds are released.

D. Somersworth Sustainability Committee report. Liz Wilson reported that a presentation by a company called Recycle Bank is scheduled for the July meeting. This company offers "rewards" to local businesses when City residents recycle. Mr. Fox Composting will present their services during the August meeting. Representatives from schools, businesses, and City staff will be invited to hear about the composting services.

E. Member items and reports. The Commission welcomed Jeremy Rhodes is a new member.

F. Director of Planning and Community Development's report. None.

G. Any other new business that may come before the Commission. None.

4) WORKSHOP BUSINESS. None

Adjournment. Dale Smith-Kenyon made a motion to adjourn. Emilee Kenyon seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously voted to adjourn at 8:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Elizabeth Wilson (Secretary)