

**Hamilton Conservation Commission
Minutes of Meeting of August 12, 2015
Meeting held at Hamilton Town Hall**

Commissioners present:

Richard Luongo, Chair, Virginia Cookson, Bob Cronin, George Tarr.

Staff present:

Jim Hankin, Conservation Agent

Others present:

Chris LaPointe

Richard Luongo opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. and mentioned that the meeting was being recorded for the purpose of writing the minutes.

Chris LaPointe, Essex County Greenbelt (ECGA), to discuss the Sagamore Street property

Discussion ensued about ECGA working in partnership with Trust for Public Land (TPL) on opportunity to acquire and protect the 340-acre Sagamore Hill property. The current project is a combination of acreage in Hamilton (170 acres) and Essex (120 acres to buy outright) and a Conservation Restriction (50 acres) with allowance for one private house.

TPL has a purchase and sale agreement with Donovan Conservation LLC that owns land in Hamilton for \$4.8 million, and TPL has an option agreement to acquire 120 acres outright and Conservation Restriction (50 acres) for \$300,000. The Hamilton land has 2,600 feet of frontage on Sagamore Street and has developable area. The price is \$5.1 million as appraised by LandVest and aggregate fair market value is \$5.225 million.

The property has a continuum of trees, stonewall and 75 acres of open fields with some used for haying. The hill is 170 feet above sea level and provides a 360 degree view from Choate Island to the back side of Crane Beach, mouth of Essex River out to the ocean and portions of Ipswich. A significant portion of the property is core habitat for rare species, 150 acres has important agricultural soils, is prime forest land, and drains into Chebacco Lake, Alewife Brook, Miles River, Castleneck River and by creek to Great Marsh. The site is a connector from interior forests of Bradley Palmer State Park, Willowdale Estates, and Appleton Farms to Crane Estate, Castle Hill and Manchester/Essex woods so it is an important wildlife corridor and trail connector.

The funding sources available for the purchase include: state Landscape Partnership Grant with application to be submitted at end of September for projects greater than 500 acres (up to \$2 million) so ECGA is getting commitments from abutting landowners in Ipswich, Essex and Hamilton to donate conservation easements over their properties, DCR for \$250,000 project investment, Essex CPA contribution of \$50,000 to \$75,000,

ECGA's \$1.5 million private fundraising campaign, and \$1.7 million in Hamilton CPA funds (this would have to be bonded for 20 years against existing and future CPA revenues, it would not increase tax rate). LaPointe noted that this total exceeds the total purchase price because some of these funding sources may not come in at maximum level. If more money is raised than needed Hamilton's contribution would be less. Discussion was on \$600,000 in Hamilton's unrestricted CPA reserve and bonding that could be used for Hamilton's portion of purchase. ECGA has been in conversation with the Town's Community Preservation Committee on project.

LaPointe noted that the property is management intensive and ECGA would own the property and grant a Conservation Restriction (CR) to the Town of Hamilton. The majority of the non-Town sources of funding for the property are for natural landscapes, habitat, passive recreation, and traditional conservation versus active recreation (i.e., playing field).

A section of the Sagamore Hill property has been seeded and fertilized for hay and other areas have been mowed. A natural resources inventory has been done on the site and there is an incredible bird population at the site. LaPointe noted that if hay is cut late on the property, ECGA would pay someone to cut. ECGA has allowed farmers to lease land for a minimal cost.

Discussion ensued about proposed kiosk map similar to what ECGA uses on its other properties that are opened for free from dawn until dusk which would show existing trails mowed through the fields, proposed parking for horse trailers and accommodation for a turnaround and gap in existing stonewall for parking.

Discussion reiterated how proposal is for Greenbelt to own the land and Hamilton to hold the CR, an exchange where ECGA would manage and monitor the property. A significant portion of the fundraised money will be given by the Town to purchase the CR, along with the other state grants. Greenbelt will manage and steward the property with stewardship endowments and endowments for ECGA. Greenbelt has a \$10 million capital campaign to endow the ECGA organization, allow for growth as well as add staff. ECGA helps protect 16,000 acres across Essex County, owning 5,500 to 6,000 acres outright that it manages. An additional 6,000 acres is in CR so there is a robust monitoring program.

LaPointe likened the Sagamore Hill property to Maplecroft Farm in Ipswich which was a 290-acre, \$5.1 million CR project where Ipswich invested \$2.2 million for CR rather than owning the property so ECGA does maintenance. Discussion ensued about various Land Trusts and control of land when CRs are donated. LaPointe explained that a CR on property that has residential development value is the vast majority of the value of the land. For the Sagamore Hill property, this is all of the development rights (i.e., 85% of the total value of the property). In some of the CR cases, property owners donate the development rights and take a tax deduction, in other cases the development rights are sold, sometimes bargain sale is used versus full market value.

There is an underground power line on the Sagamore Hill property but there are no wells only a spring feed pond. The property is owned by LLC with different Donovan family members having an interest. A building envelope that would allow a house is part of overall agreement with access in Essex. There are several rights of way on the property and subdivision plan has been put before Essex Planning Board with emergency egress through wetlands on Belcher Street.

Discussion was on how the Commission is working on Open Space plan and this will not be a requirement for Landscape Partnership grant. LaPointe has met with CPC twice, many CPC members have visited the site, and a CPA project application will be submitted to the Committee. Nearly all of the Selectmen have visited the site. Frequent questions from Town officials address if the property is priced properly, and if the timing is correct given Hamilton's priorities.

Vote Minutes of July 15 and July 29, 2015

These minutes will be voted on by the Commission at its September 9, 2015 meeting.

Notice of Intent (Public Hearing to be continued to September 23, 2015 at request of Applicant) 470 Essex Street Construct single family house, septic system and associated activity in No Build and No Disturb Zones Roger LeBlanc Applicant, Bill Manuell rep

A septic system plan will be filed shortly with the Board of Health and approval reached before applicant returns to the Commission.

Virginia Cookson moved to approve the continuation of the Notice of Intent public hearing for 470 Essex Street to September 23, 2015. George Tarr seconded the motion. The Commission voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Notice of Intent (Public Hearing continued from July 29, 2015) 435 Bay Road, Myopia Hunt Club Dredge pond and construct new pump house Myopia Hunt Club Owner, DeRosa Env. Rep.

DEP has not made comments yet on the project. Mr. Hankin will prepare an email for the Commission describing resource areas for the project (i.e., Land under Water, Riverfront, BVW, Land Subject to Flooding, No Disturb and No Build Zones).

Ms. Cookson moved to approve the continuation of the Notice of Intent public hearing for Myopia Hunt Club, 435 Bay Road, to September 9, 2015. Bob Cronin seconded the motion. The Commission voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Certificate of Compliance

11 Villa Road Edward Bond Owner DEP File Number 172-0288, Bk 13573 page 294
Construction of single family dwelling with septic system, landscaping, dock

The Order of Conditions was issued in 1996 and house as-built is located outside of the Commission's jurisdiction. The slope to Chebacco Lake is well vegetated. Mr. Hankin presented photographs of site to the Commission. The applicant has paid the late COC request fee. All work done was within confines of plan and dock was licensed.

Ms. Cookson moved to issue a Certificate of Compliance for DEP File Number 172-0288. Seconded by Mr. Tarr. The Commission voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Mr. Cronin moved to adjourn. Ms. Cookson seconded the motion. The Commission voted unanimously in favor of the motion. Commission adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Minutes submitted September 4, 2015 by Jane Dooley