



## **Town of Ayer Conservation Commission**

Town Hall \* One Main Street \* Ayer, MA 01432 \* 978-772-8249

Minutes for **9/20/2016** – Approved 10/13/2016

Location: Ayer Town Hall, 2nd Floor

Present: Bill Daniels (BD, Chair), George Bacon (GB, Vice-Chair), Takashi Tada (TT, Member), Bonnie Tillotson (BT, Member), Jessica Gugino (JG, Member/Clerk)

Not Present: Brian Colleran (CA, Conservation Administrator)

APAC taped: No

### **6:16 PM – Open Meeting**

- **A Special Meeting was called for the purpose of discussing ConCom's presentation to the Board of Selectmen, scheduled for 7:25 p.m. this evening (9/20).**
  - In addition to ConCom members, Chuck Miller, Chair of the Pond & Dam Management Committee, was present.
  - In appearing before the BOS, the Commission will be asking for the support of the Board in placing two Articles on the Warrant for Fall Town Meeting (10/24):
    - 1) Expanding the CA position to full-time with benefits.
    - 2) \$54,000 funding for 2017 weed treatments on Sandy, Flannagan, and Pine Meadow ponds.
  - The 9/15 memo sent in advance by Chair Daniels to the BOS for their meeting packet is attached to these minutes.
    - It details the rationale for ConCom making these two requests before Town Meeting.
  - Additional observations made:
    - Mr. Miller supported seeking clarification from the BOS at a future date regarding the role of the Pond & Dam Committee.
      - BD suggested ConCom meet first with both Pond & Dam and the DPW to identify best where Pond & Dam could fill in gaps and complement the role of the other two.
      - All felt it would be better to approach the BOS with a preliminary plan and suggestions.
    - A related topic to discuss with the DPW is what their plan is with regard to Balch Dam (East Main Street Spillway).
      - The dam is in poor condition and requires repair.
      - BD noted that the existence of 3 ponds is based on the existence of this dam.
      - Mr. Miller noted the unresolved difficulty in identifying who has responsible ownership over the dam, the State or the Town.
- **7:11 PM – Adjourn Meeting**
  - GB moved to adjourn; TT 2<sup>nd</sup>.
    - Motion approved unanimously.



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September 15, 2016

Members of the Board of Selectmen;

The Conservation Commission will be meeting with you next week at your September 20<sup>th</sup> meeting to ask for your support for the placement of two Articles on the Warrant for this year's Fall Town Meeting.

1. Increasing the Conservation Administrator position from part-time to full-time (40 hours/week) with benefits.

The Conservation Administrator position must be filled with an individual who is able to manage the permitting and office work, meet with residents and developers, and coordinate with the State's DEP. Additionally, a good Administrator must have specialized environmental expertise. The Conservation Commission has been involved in two searches for a candidate in the past ten years, as well as several searches to fill an interim need. It has been extremely difficult to find a person with the skill set and interest in this position. Candidates – good candidates – have been put off when they learn that the position is both part time, and un-benefited. We have been incredibly lucky to find two people who had the skills and could make the opportunity work for them.

There are many demands on the Administrator involving work both inside and outside of Town Hall. The true demands of the position cannot be covered adequately in the 20 hours available. This was noted by our previous Administrator, Becky DaSilva-Conde, prior to her departure, by members of the Commission, and by our current Administrator.

In addition, the Town's needs for the Administrator are expanding with the Ch. 61 Working Group and the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP). The Goals section in the draft OSRP shows the Commission as a "responsible party" many, many times. We anticipate that the requests made on our Commission and Administrator will increase. The Commission feels this is the time to act and provide more hours for the position to better serve the community here in Ayer.

After members of the Commission met with the Board on June 21, the Town Accountant prepared data representing the cost impact of this job expansion. A copy is attached, along with our current job description. We appreciate the time you have spent on this issue to date, and will be happy to discuss this further with the Board on the 20<sup>th</sup>.



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### **2. Funding for 2017 aquatic weed treatments on Sandy Pond, Flannagan Pond, and Pine Meadow Pond.**

It is clear that several of the ponds are in increasingly urgent need of weed management in spring 2017. The Commission will issue an RFP during the winter to be ready to have weed treatment done at the optimal time early in the spring. We are requesting funding approval now because waiting for funding through a Spring Town Meeting vote makes it difficult to sign a contract for treatment early enough to be most effective. We also anticipate that the impact of the prolonged drought on invasive weed growth this year will lead to many more towns seeking treatments on their water bodies in 2017. That competition will make scheduling even more difficult. We need to be prepared as soon as possible.

We asked Solitude Lake Management for cost estimates for treatment (attached). Solitude is a new company, a merger of Aquatic Control Technologies and Lycott Environmental. Both companies have treated our ponds. The cost estimate range for three ponds breaks down as follows:

Sandy Pond:	\$18,000 - \$20,000
Flannagan Pond:	\$30,000 - \$35,000
Pine Meadow Pond:	<u>\$4000 - \$5000</u>
 TOTAL:	 \$52,000 - \$60,000
With 15% Contingency added:	\$59,800 - \$69,000

There are approximately \$15,000 in funds previously approved for treatment on Flannagan Pond only. We are respectfully asking the Board to approve a Warrant Article raising and appropriating up to \$54,000 for 2017 weed treatments to cover all three ponds listed above.

This treatment is in keeping with the final draft of Geosyntec's detailed study of Ayer's ponds. The DPW is already acting on many of the report's recommendations. The Commission, with the Pond & Dam Committee, anticipate further discussion with BOS and the Finance Committee to help us formulate a long-term management plan as discussions for the FY2018 budget begin to take place.

We look forward to meeting with you on September 20<sup>th</sup>.

Respectfully,

William Daniels, Chair  
Ayer Conservation Commission