

**Moose Hill Water Commission
Meeting Minutes**

Minutes of December 10, 2013

Members present: Kurt Parliment; Chairman, Carl Wicklund, Jr.

Members not present: Harry Brooks

Meeting called to order at 6PM

New Business

- Common Ground Land Trust

Glenda Williamson of the Common Ground Land Trust Group contacted the Board Secretary for the group asking to be put on the next meeting agenda. She explained that the Land Trust Group wanted to touch base and catch up on any progress with the reservoir and the Ehn property that abuts the reservoir.

Mr. Rick Barrel of the Common Ground Land Trust Group was in attendance for discussion.

Mr. Parliment gave an update regarding the recent meeting the Commissioners had with the Town of Charlton and the possibility of regionalizing. He noted that the Town of Spencer was also invited, but they indicated there was no interest.

The Board Secretary noted Mr. Knox, Superintendent of the Cherry Valley/Rochdale Water District had the chance to speak with the Spencer Water Superintendent and explain why Moose Hill wanted to meet. At that point, Spencer noted they were opened to discussion.

Mr. Barrel asked if Moose Hill was going to continue to try and move forward.

Mr. Parliment said yes, the Commissioners met with Charlton Water to talk about regionalizing. He was unsure where DEP stood on regionalizing, but understood that regionalizing was something DEP favored.

Mr. Wicklund said it would be more minable to go regional.

Mr. Barrel asked by going regional, wouldn't that bring the price up.

Mr. Parliment said yes, there would definitely be additional costs. Mr. Barrel agreed because Charlton isn't that close to Leicester.

Mr. Wicklund noted Charlton having some water pipes that came very close to the Leicester Town line near Rochdale. He explained that there were water pipes going down Route 56 and Charlton's water pipes stop just short of Leicester's Town line at Route 20.

Mr. Barrel asked what the concern was, because Mr. Parliment had said that Leicester, at some point, was going to need to tap into Moose Hill's supply.

Mr. Parliment said that concern had come from the Town's water districts. This is tough to explain because neither water district has come right out and said, yes start the project with their blessing. The bottom line is, the water districts are very hesitant to fully commit, but they do and will need that water.

Mr. Parliment continued. Information received from the Commissioner's engineers and past board members noted that the water departments wouldn't fully commit, but will tell you that they will need the water in the future and that goes with Spencer and Charlton, as well, when looking at development.

Leicester Water had noted, in the contract which put the pipes in along Route 9 west, they will supply an X-amount of gallons to those pipes, but their capacity doesn't allow them to do a full build-out in that area.

Mr. Wicklund said the Town's Master Plan states the expansion of Route 9 west was to attract industrial business and that there's well over 1 ½ million square feet of floor space for businesses. However, there isn't enough of water to supply for fire suppression, which means every business will have to have a standpipe.

Mr. Barrel asked if these businesses could dig their own well.

Mr. Wicklund explained that a private well wouldn't give enough volume for fire suppression.

Mr. Parliment agreed and explained that Wal-Mart was required to put in their own storage tank for fire suppression.

Mr. Barrel asked if Wal-Mart was on Town Water. Mr. Parliment said yes, but they had to put in a tank for fire suppression because the Water District couldn't support that.

Mr. Parliment continued. It's been tricky and with the State; they have been very hesitant on supporting Moose Hill.

Mr. Barrel said the infrastructure, to make that happen, are there easements in place already? To run that route, the Commissioners would be looking at eminent domain or easements to run pipes.

Mr. Parliment said there are the pipes along Route 9 west, which go as far as Everlast Nursery at Breezy Bend. Now, it's a matter of getting the pipes down Watson Street to Moose Hill Road and then to the reservoir.

Mr. Barrel asked if any private property would be crossed.

Mr. Wicklund said it could be tied into the eminent domain on the roads, which is 21-feet from the center on either side, which technically is a Town easement.

Mr. Parliment said going back to Spencer with their pumping station on Watson Street and being in the same watershed as Moose Hill; the water districts in Leicester are all in different watersheds than Moose Hill and that becomes the politics and the people who will be serviced. Mr. Wicklund explained for someone who is now on the system, was told the Town is to bring Moose Hill Reservoir on-line and that their rates over the next 20-years will be escalated above and beyond what it would take for normal maintenance for their lines, and those households cannot really get any benefits out of that as water subscriber and it's going to be next to impossible to sell it to them.

Mr. Parliment said it's a catch 22, if industry comes in, then there's a benefit, but who knows what will happen.

Mr. Barrel felt that would decrease the value of the land, because anyone who would be looking to buy property for industry would look at it as, what their investment would be in the building and in the infrastructure to get their business up and running and see where their investment would come off. It would come off the selling price of the land to make the business feasible.

Anyone who owns land would be taking a financial hit and he's looking at it as a landowner and as someone looking to open up a business. He would be looking to buy property and if property value goes down and then he finds out there's an extra tax to run the water.

Mr. Barrel continued. He understood where the Commissioners were coming from, but anyone who pulls a permit for an industrial complex will get hit with a fee to bring the business on board to supplement the revenue. Even though that does make sense, that's going to cut into the landowner's profit.

Mr. Wicklund said there is a new development proposed across from Wal-Mart that will have a gas station, a bank, and a car wash, where is the car wash getting that water to operate?

Mr. Barrel noted there will have to be the need, because it can't be pushed onto people.

Mr. Parliment and Mr. Wicklund both agreed.

Mr. Barrel said unless there's an industry that have already done their demographics and wants to locate in Leicester, then there'll be the question on where they will get their water.

Mr. Wicklund agreed saying, a proposed business can buy a plot of land for 7 million, but it will cost them 13 more million to put in the water system.

Mr. Barrel said, and that is when industry would renegotiate their price on the land with the landowner.

Mr. Wicklund said one of the biggest problems with the Town's Water Districts was that no one wanted to give up their plight, or wanted to be a partner in any of this. They are used to running their own sections by themselves and not answering to anyone, except their Water Board of Commissioners.

Then the Moose Hill Commission comes along asking to go regional and asking for a commitment. The answer we get is that they don't want to do that, which is part of the problem with Spencer. Spencer really doesn't want to partner with Moose Hill, because they got the volume and they wouldn't want to kick more money out for not much of a return on their investment.

Whereas, Moose Hill would love to be able to use some of Spencer's water pipes or the Watson Street pumping station, but it can't get to that point until there's some funding.

Then there's the Town side, which hasn't allowed any funding at all to this project. This is more or less the ugly issue that's kept in the closet.

Mr. Barrel said the cost falls on the users. Mr. Wicklund agreed.

Mr. Barrel said it's the same thing in Spencer when people hook into Town water or sewer, the system ends up needing to be upgraded and the cost falls on the users or homeowners. For someone who's got \$1400 a month to spend on water, sewer & rent and then the cost of water & sewer continue to go up, what does that do to that homeowner?

Mr. Parliment said State Regulations and what the Water Districts have to deal with, is a lot more than what a homeowner on a private well has to deal with. At some point down the road, DEP will start regulating private wells and will require some homeowners to hook into Town water, due to contamination or whatever.

Mr. Parliment noted another thing with the Ehn property; it would be great to be able to get the 3-acres, because with the remaining land and anyone wanting to develop within that water supply will have a ton of responsibility to protect that reservoir. Anyone wanting to put in a septic system, it could become cost prohibitive.

Mr. Barrel said there are plenty of systems out there that can turn it into clean drinking water before it ever hits the pipes.

Mr. Parliment agreed but there again, we're talking costs that are going to add up.

Mr. Barrel said he hasn't walked that land yet, but felt there were a lot of wetlands around there and then there will be the required buffers. In order to put a septic system in, the Board of Health requires there be at least a 100-foot buffer from wetlands.

Mr. Parliment said anyone picking up the 33-acre piece will have a lot of wetlands in the back. It shows on the Assessor's Map that the road narrows and then expands again where it abuts the reservoir and to try to put a road through a wetland won't be easy.

Mr. Barrel said he felt someone had advised the Ehn Family about the remaining land being wet and that they probably should sell it all together.

He noted that the Rod and Gun bought the Hannah Joseph's land on Bond Street and he had mentioned to the Rod & Gun about the 33-acre piece, but they were tapped out.

Mr. Barrel continued. He mentioned the 33-acre piece to Common Ground Group, but the group doesn't have the money or funding source to buy it.

His interest in the 33-acre piece was for different reasons than what Moose Hill was looking at it for, but he felt there was that common interest in the property. For example, the Rod & Gun has 100+ acres with fish and wildlife; there's Moose Hill Reservoir with so many acres. So if that area gets built out with houses, that's a cut off or chocking point for animals to be crossing and that land is very heavily hunted.

Mr. Wicklund questioned whether the State would have some funding to help out.

Mr. Parliment said that maybe the new Town Administrator would be willing to help out, but he wasn't sure where the Selectmen currently stood on this project.

Mr. Wicklund said it is hard to do anything when there isn't a working budget. Anything that needs to be done and goes through the State in order to get this adopted as a water supply requires a lot of studies, which costs money. Every time a study is done, there's a different set of hoops to be jumped through with the State. For example; when one study gets completed, the State requires three more studies and each one will cost X amount of dollars.

Whenever there are dealings with the State, there are the regulations on bidding practices and who can be hired and that can add another 25-30% thrown onto the cost. It ends up never being financially feasible for anyone.

Where the Commission doesn't have any money and there are no plans to bring money into this, how can the reservoir be brought online?

Mr. Parliment asked Mr. Barrel what his thoughts were on this.

Mr. Barrel said he was looking to see what interest Moose Hill had on the 33-acres. The way that was carved out, it is basically the whole backside of that reservoir and he believed it connected over to Howard Hurley Road.

Mr. Parliment agreed that was the way it was shown on the Assessor's Maps. He noted the thing the State did make clear was for the Town to start showing interest in preserving land around the reservoir, because that would be a plus.

Mr. Wicklund asked if there was a plan presented yet on how the Ehn Estate was being divided. Mr. Barrel said there's a picture of the division shown online through a real estate web site. The lots are basically all rectangular frontage lots with 200-foot frontage each on 3-3 1/2-acre lots. Then there's the one 33-acre lot where the trail goes down and crosses the river where there is the snowmobile bridge; then there's a spot where it opens up and goes down to the reservoir, where it connects to the Rod & Gun land.

This was why he was interested in the 33-acres, for the protection of that corridor. He would really like to try for the entire 50-acres, but that's probably not feasible. What is attracting attention is the low price on the 33-acres, which is \$100,000.

In the Open Space Plan for Leicester, this property is mentioned and then there's the potential of connecting the Mid State Trail. Currently the trail crosses over the reservoir and goes up the road and then onto Moose Hill. If it could come down and cross over Howard Hurley Road and go to the backside of the reservoir, that would keep people off of having to walk the road, they could just hook up to the snowmobile trail and cross over.

There are potentially different groups that could be interested in this property. His reason for coming to this meeting tonight was because Moose Hill had shown some interest in this property

and if Common Ground and Moose Hill could work as partners to approach the Town; i.e. Selectmen, Assessor's, Zoning Board, Conservation, and get some financial support. For example, what other funding sources are there that maybe available to the Town that isn't available to the Land Trust, with the Town acting on behalf of the Water Commissioners.

Mr. Parliment asked about asking the Mid State Trail Group to help out.

Mr. Barrel said the Mid State Group doesn't have a lot of money. When the Land Trust Group has applied for Grants, the more people or groups that show interest, there's a better chance on receiving the funding.

Mr. Wicklund questioned Mass Wildlife helping. Mr. Barrel said Mass Wildlife will be approached about it, if and when it starts moving forward, but right now he is looking at it as, how feasible is this and can they get any support.

Mr. Parliment said this Commission will need to talk with Town officials about that because as mentioned, the Moose Hill budget couldn't pull out that kind of money.

Mr. Barrel said we could be talking token amounts, \$1000, \$2000 or just a letter of support.

Letters of support from the Selectmen, or Planning Board, can be types of things that might help start a file of supporters.

The Common Ground group was able to get the Town of Spencer to chip in money for the Sibley project and it was voted on by the Town's people, because people want open space.

With Leicester's Open Space Plan and having the Town Planner in our corner with a letter of support and with every letter showing support, the more it can be talked about.

He was asking to have Moose Hill, as an interested party, supporting the Land Trust Group on the 33-acres and to have one person, from the Commission, as the contact person who he can communicate with, in regards to communicating with the Selectmen or Planning trying to get some of those Letters of Support.

Mr. Barrel continued. They have a couple of other avenues they were looking to approach, such as, meeting with the Greater Worcester Land Trust Group regarding that property. They have a meeting set up for tomorrow morning between the Common Ground and Greater Worcester to discuss how to move forward obtaining those 33-acres.

Mr. Wicklund asked about the Mass Audubon Society. Mr. Barrel said they are tapped out for this area and they usually look to add onto their existing properties, so they wouldn't be interested in this parcel.

Mr. Parliment said the Selectmen's liaison has not shown any interest in coming to any of the Moose Hill Meetings so it's tough to say where the Selectmen stand on this.

Mr. Wicklund suggested meeting with the Town Administrator and expressing the Commissioner's frustration and also giving a little bit of history on what Moose Hill is dealing with. Mr. Parliment agreed.

Mr. Barrel felt that was the right direction to go for the Commission, because if the Commissioners can show that they are willing to try and protect that land, it may help with some of the State's concerns.

Mr. Parliment said all these things are connected on how to make this a more workable situation. He felt it will have to be more regional than local and that will be anyone's guess on how that will play out.

Mr. Wicklund reiterated wanting to review the plan showing how the 6-lots were being carved out on the Ehn property.

The Board Secretary mentioned asking the Assessor's Principal Clerk for a copy of the online real estate advertisement which shows the 6-lot land division. Also, getting a copy of the ANR plan that will be presented to the Planning Board for signature sometime in January.

Mr. Parliment & Mr. Wicklund both agreed.

Mr. Wicklund suggested putting out some publicity regarding Moose Hill becoming a potential water shed area, with the anticipation that there will be a reservoir there.

Mr. Parliment said also with the waterfront properties, no one would be able to use that water to boat on or any other kind of water recreation.

Mr. Wicklund suggested the contact person be the Board Secretary and that way it will get disseminated to all the Commissioners in a timely manner and it can be worked on it that way. All agreed.

Mr. Barrel invited anyone interested, on attending the meeting with the Greater Worcester Land Trust Group tomorrow at 1PM at the Greater Worcester Land Trust Office located in Kelly Square. This meeting was to try and get some ideas on funding and feasibility. The Greater Worcester group agreed to mentor Common Ground on whether to move forward with the 33-acres or not and who to contact for funding, etc.

Mr. Parliment said the issue with Spencer/Leicester land trust, as opposed to, why are we going in that direction with Worcester? Is it the money issue or is it just for the information.

Mr. Barrel said any expressed interest in the property, however; Worcester does not want to put any more money into Leicester or Spencer. Their core is Worcester and their members donate money to preserve land in Worcester, but it's in their interest to preserve land, so Worcester offered to mentor Common Ground, who is new to this land trust thing, and give some direction, some contacts, etc.

They also plan on walking the land on Thursday afternoon around 1PM providing the weather is decent.

Mr. Wicklund said even though tomorrow's meeting is short notice, after tomorrow's meeting, if any further information on meetings can be passed onto the Board Secretary, maybe one of the Commissioners can make a future meeting.

Mr. Barrel agreed and thanked the Commissioners for their time. All agreed to stay in touch.

Budget/financial Reports

- Budget Reports

FY15 Budget request due Wednesday, December 18th. Every dollar must be justified during the budget review process. The Commissioners agreed to level fund on the salary line and maintenance line and agreed to reduce Office supplies from \$124 to \$75 for the cost of envelopes.

Approval of Minutes

- 10/8/2013

MOTION: Mr. Wicklund moved to approve the minutes of October 8, 2013

SECONDED: Mr. Parliment – Discussion: None

VOTE: All in Favor

Correspondence

- FY15 Budget Documents
- Letter from Steven Tyler, Superintendent of Spencer Water Department regarding meeting with Moose Hill Commissioners to discuss regionalization.
- July and August Budget Reports

After a brief discussion, the Commissioners agreed to hold the next meeting on Tuesday, February 4th at 6PM

MOTION: Mr. Wicklund moved to adjourn

SECONDED: Mr. Parliment – Discussion: None

VOTE: All in Favor

Meeting adjourned at 7:05PM

Respectfully submitted:

Barbara Knox

Barbara Knox