

Monkton ANAC Meeting Minutes for 2 March, 2015

In Attendance

Members: Deb Gaynor, Sam Burr, and Laura Farrell; Corine arrived at 5 pm

Absent: Rachel Schattman

Guests: Bob Heiser

1) Laura called the meeting to order (4:35 pm)

2) Sam showed everyone the tax parcel map and we discussed how to resolve the question of where the boundaries actually are and how much acreage is involved in the two swamp lots. Bob believes the total acreage the Town already owns is 188 acres, all of which is conserved with the easement held by VLT. Ultimately, VLT does not consider the absolute acreage to be important, since these are all contiguous lots with indefinite boundaries.

3) We talked to Bob about whether the entire parcel as a conserved piece will or should have a management plan. Laura will ask Steve Parren if there was any work done on a management plan. Bob would like to have one, certainly for the current parcels and preferably for the new additions as well. No one knows if motorized vehicles includes boats. The Martin parcel easement states that the right to use the land for non-motorized, non-commercial activities is allowed. There shall be no motorized vehicles on the property except for management purposes, maintenance activities, emergencies, and handicapped access.

Continuity of management is a strong argument for having a single owner (the Town). That would allow for a single management plan, without any conflicts in the plans. At the selling price, the taxes calculated using the 2014 rate would be \$389.

VLT's intent is to merge the lands into the existing (Martin) easement.

Liability—ask the town's agent, and the answer is likely that there would be an indiscernible impact.

There are very few wetlands that have been conserved, and the TNC studies on resiliency in the future with climate change indicate that to allow movement of both plants and animals through the landscape will be very important. Also, if wildlife is important to Monkton residents, having a diversity of features across the landscape is very important to provide for a strong population of wildlife of interest.

The presence of a spring or seep on the property is also an important feature.

This wetland is also key to the water quality for all the drinking water sources of the houses on Mountain Road and on the Bristol Road.

With single ownership, the easement costs are a very good deal for the Town. Bob also noted that TNC really went out on a limb to protect this property when they really don't want to own more properties. They were concerned that it was going to go into development for the timber resources. Sam noted that TNC only has two stewards for the entire state, so having the Town own it and VLT hold the easement will benefit everyone.

Sometimes VLT states overtly that a management plan must be approved by VLT; sometimes they just look at it, and if the plan is not consistent with the easement, they point out that there's a problem.

The management plan (unlike the easement) can be updated as long as it does not conflict with the easement itself. For instance, the Town might want to someday build a boardwalk into the swamp for educational purposes, or build trails for recreation, or other such compatible activities.

At the time that the SB makes a decision, then VLT will do the legal work, perhaps visit the site again, and prepare the easement for merging the easements, and being prepared for the closing.

4) Deb will write the vegetation part, and Laura will write the animal part. We will have those ready by March 25th meeting. Corine will take the pieces and turn them into a coherent report. Sam will talk to the Recreation Committee and the Planning Commission to get letters of support, and Laura will talk to the Conservation Commission to get a support letter from them.

5) At our April 15 meeting we will finalize everything and prepare to talk to the SB. On March 25 we will meet with Hinesburg and Starksboro. On March 3, one-half hour after Town Meeting adjourns, we will meet at Town Hall to discuss Al's request for an ANC contribution to the Cota appraisal.

6) Deb moved to adjourn. Corine seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 6:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Deb Gaynor, for Rachel Schattman, ANAC Secretary