

Minutes of the WPA Annual Meeting
Wonalancet Chapel
7:15 p.m.
August 10, 2008

Attending:

John and Ann Carman
John and Martha Chandler
Ian and Janet Cooke
Stan and Nancy Coville
Dick Daniels and Sandy Cole
Bill and Mary Hargens
John Howell
Doug McVicar
`Chele Miller
David and Denney Morton
Marie Ortner
Amy Semmes
Ted and Barbara Sidley
Heather Thompson-Ryan
John Waite
Jack Waldron
George and Sally Zink

Doug McVicar, presiding at his first annual meeting as president, opened the proceedings with thanks to all who contributed to a delightful supper in Nancy Stearns's barn, which proved to be a great refuge from a very heavy downpour.

Following a round of self-introductions, the 2007 annual meeting minutes were accepted after a correction: referring to page 4, lines 11-12, Martha Chandler stated that the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests is not specifically a back-up for the Birch Farm Intervale Easement between Helen Steele and the Green Mountain Conservation Group. This has been noted in the 2007 minutes.

Treasurer's report: please see attached sheet.

Board of Directors' Report and Recommendations:

1. **Road Clean-up Day:** At `Chele's suggestion, it was moved and seconded that the WPA sponsor a "roadside clean-up day" on September 20, from 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. The plan is to meet at the Wonalancet Chapel, go out in teams for conversation and litter control, and gather in the grove to enjoy a picnic after the work is done.

2. **www.Wonalancet.org:** Doug described the web site he has initiated and invited everyone to take a look and send him comments and suggestions. At present, it

includes a home page with the mission statement, governing documents, and minutes of past annual meetings.

3. Administrative review: Doug listed board members' terms: John Waite, Ann Carman, Gretchen Behr, and Stan Coville whose terms will expire in 2009; Ted Sidley, `Chele Miller, and Doug, 2010; and Diana Beliard and Michael Purves whose terms expire this year. Diana has agreed to continue her service on the board. Michael Purves has asked to step down because of a very busy schedule, leaving one vacancy on the board.

4. Nominations: Stan suggested that the board act as a nominating committee to fill Michael's spot, rather than having nominations at this annual meeting. Doug explained that board members need not live in the Wonalancet area, as anyone can participate in meetings via teleconferencing. John Waite supported this and suggested that we find a person we don't see every day who would expand the board's outlook. Denney Morton then moved that the board become a nominating committee (which is possible in an interim period). Ted suggested changing Denney's move to allow the board to appoint a member, with approval at the next annual meeting. This change was moved and seconded and unanimously passed.

5. Rapid Response Fund: Doug explained that, because of limitations in its designated use, it would be ideal if the fund could be repurposed within the scope of the by-laws. In thinking how this might be done, he talked with Terry Knowles of the New Hampshire Division of Charitable Trusts. Terry explained that given the facts of our case this may be only done through a legal procedure. The WPA would file a standard application in Carroll County Probate Court. The NH Charitable Trusts unit would review our case first, and if they find favorably, the court usually issues the order without a hearing. Terry recommended consulting a legal specialist and said that such changes are a common occurrence. The cost is about \$175, and there is a template for the application. She also said that notification of donors is not part of the process. Doug felt he might notify the donors as a courtesy. John Chandler commented that the Court might ask that notice be sent to contributing members. George Zink moved that we initiate the proper proceedings to repurpose the fund. John Waite seconded the motion; it passed unanimously.

6. Dues Increase: Doug included a note to members regarding the increase on the agenda sheet for this meeting:

Why increase the annual dues? The WPA currently enjoys the security of an endowment (the so-called "Rapid Response Fund"). Of course, this is a potentially invaluable resource for the community, but it does create some additional responsibilities for the Association. As a 501 (c)(3) public charity, the WPA is expected to raise at least one third of its income from public sources, such as dues, grants, and fundraising. Interest earned is not considered income from a public source. Therefore, in order to assure that dues income keeps up with interest we earn, the board of directors is recommending a dues increase to \$40

per year. However, recognizing that this may present a hardship for some, the board also recommends that those who wish their dues to remain at \$25 have that option. (The election to pay at the \$25 level would be based on the honor system).

Opening the discussion, John Waite repeated the point that the fund's interest income competes with money that comes from dues and gifts. Jack Waldron commented that if dues are to balance the Rapid Response Fund, the WPA will need a broader base. John responded: "We do intend to expand the dues-paying base. If we're going to facilitate conservation other than by covenants, we'll want to expand the fund." Stan commented, "This [the raise in dues] helps us over a hurdle now. Later, we can find other ways to balance dues, gifts, and fund income."

John Chandler: "We need to cross this small bridge now."

Dick Daniels: "If we make money, we could bring in speakers."

Martha Chandler: "The charitable element is a fine line and questionable. A covenant to preserve one's own land is not charity." Ted's response: "Putting a restriction on one's land that lowers its value couldn't be construed as self-profitable."

George Zink: "We will have a list of all the covenant signers after the covenants are filed. Are we getting a list of co-signers?"

Dick explained that he didn't sign, as he has an easement. Denney asked if we have a map indicating which properties are protected by covenant and which by easement; she added that it would be great if it could be color-coded. John Waite agreed that it would be good to be able to visualize what we've done, publish a map for covenant members, and then put this information in a larger context.

Returning to a question about \$40 vs. \$25 dues, Doug stated that the WPA board wants to raise the dues to \$40, but that no questions would be asked of those who choose to pay \$25.

Ted then moved that the Annual Meeting approve a two-tiered system, with details to be worked out by the board. George commented that he felt it important that covenant signers pay \$40 to maintain the value of the covenant and as annual support of the organization. Further, he felt that board officers should be covenant signers. He continued, "A member is someone who is supporting the covenant and the organization and has a vote."

Ted's motion was ultimately seconded and unanimously approved.

General Discussion:

Martha, reflecting on the comments and suggestions about a map, said, "There's a major distinction between the power of conservation easements and covenants. If the two are lumped in quality, it's unjust. Easements are forever; covenants are limited in time and have different burdens. We should distinguish between these and have respect for people who put their property under an easement. This is the direction we should go."

John Chandler added: “Progress in conservation has moved people to consider easements. Some easements are given, some sold, some involve a partial sale. This is the best route for us to take. We have \$70,000 to invest in this. This is a vital role for the organization to take on.”

Stan added that easements could go through Green Mountain Conservation Group and that they would enforce the provisions. Ian asked how money would be raised for easements. George responded that most organizations won’t take on an easement unless funds have already been raised. Martha commented that the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests monitors all easements by satellite, and that this is very expensive. She said that it is not unusual to ask the donor for \$10,000 towards maintenance of the easement. If a donor cannot pay this amount, the Society itself does some fund-raising in cases of very important land.

Ian asked if there can be an easement without someone being responsible. Martha responded, “You have to have a responsible party. It’s a huge responsibility. The donor expects the organization to do maintenance forever.”

Dick then moved that a map be made, published on the web site, and sent to members. This was seconded and unanimously approved.

George recalled seeing a map showing every property in Sandwich and Tamworth, with every piece protected by SPNHF identified and other protective organizations named. He will try to locate the map.

Ted stated that we have a map of protected property and could add a “C” to covenanted land. He felt that it may not be necessary at this time to research the organizations holding the easements.

George continued: “It’s worthwhile bringing it up that a map can be done. The fact is that Chocorua keeps expanding its conservation area. Why don’t we incorporate a few miles toward Tamworth?” Doug: “There’s a 1994 map that the Association has used that shows what lands we have traditionally considered to lie within the boundaries of Wonalancet.” Stan added that at an earlier date the WPA had set broader boundaries and wanted to fill in the area, but the board and membership didn’t have the energy to solicit covenants as far away as Fowler’s Mill Road, for example. “We have to expand our membership if we want to go to Chocorua Lake,” he said!

John Waite added, “Any development between Wonalancet and Tamworth affects us. If we can proactively let people know we can help, and if we can focus on expanding our mission without limiting it, we can move ahead as an organization. We can support, not compete with Green Mountain. The purpose of our organization is to protect property on this road (113A) and become more a resource. I think this speaks to our mission.”

Chele added that our efforts can also be in education.

Ted stated that he would like to see the WPA address itself to wildlife issues and collaborate with others to coordinate wildlife actions that would benefit life that might be present in this area.

Nancy Coville asked if the mission statement on the website is the same as stated in the covenants. The answer was “Yes.” Ted authored the statement; several people added that they really like the phrase, “wild and bucolic”!

Martha suggested that we could organize work groups to patrol the area and cut out invasive species, such as Virginia creeper, honeysuckle, and, especially, Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*). Doug thought this could be an excellent new direction for some of our conservation and preservation energies.

Denney: I think we should focus on the word “bucolic.” Open land has to support itself, as is happening with the Tamworth Farmers’ Market, Peg Loughran’s bread, etc. The best way for people to make a living is for us to encourage and support that kind of activity. It’s no good having open land if it can’t be supported—i.e. buy locally! Doug commented that we could list local businesses on the website.

Ian: “Support mowing!”

Denney: “We could support a cooperative mowing venture.”

John Waite: “By proactively expanding the sense of community, the fund should allow us to do things like invasive species work.”

Ted suggested that we could sponsor summer programs—many topics would be useful for us and others, and we could also provide information about conservation. Doug added that other organizations may have helpful insights; Barbara suggested programs in cooperation with the WODC.

Jack: “The issue is that so many events are happening in summer.” Doug: “Is summer always the best time? And, could we have events in people’s homes?”

John Howell: “Part of the issue is, where is Wonalancet? Speaking as a marketer, we need to define our area. The race track issue drew people who saw water as a boundary. The amorphous quality is part of Wonalancet’s charm. But to sharpen the mission of the organization, we have to figure out what Wonalancet is. We need to define boundaries and partnership organizations; we need to define ‘local.’” One comment, overheard: “I always thought Wonalancet was a state of mind!”

Jack, offering the final comment of the evening: “Start building alliances and relationships with other organizations.”

There being no further discussion, the meeting concluded at 9:35, with thanks to Doug McVicar for leading us through a broad-ranging discussion..

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Carman, secretary