

Wonalancet Preservation Association

Annual Meeting: *The Spirit of Wonalancet*

Wonalancet Chapel, Sunday, August 11, 2013

Doug McVicar, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:45 p.m.

Present were 18 members of whom ten were dues paying members. During the introductions each person briefly told the stories of when and how they first came to Wonalancet.

Minutes. The Minutes were accepted as written. (Ruth Moscovitch, Barbara Sidley).

Members applauded the Cookes for their donation of land to the US Forest Service.

Treasurer's Report. John Waite, Treasurer, distributed an account of activity for the past year, noting that the WPA ending balance 7/31 was \$73,322.57. John asked the membership to approve an auditing of the books by a committee of members not on the Board. Membership approved unanimously.

Election of Directors. The terms of three Board members expire at this meeting – Ted Sidley, Doug McVicar, Nancy Stearns. There being no nominations from the floor, a motion was made: (Ruth Moscovitch, Frumie Selchen)

MOTION: To approve the re-election of the three directors whose terms have expired. The motion passed unanimously.

Wonalancet Updates.

Broadband Internet Options

Tamworth Wireless is evolving its business model to meet local needs as circumstances change. Though new sign-ups have dwindled, they are still adding a few more clients. A new service is building internet networks for local institutions such as Remick Farm, Rockywold Deephaven Camps, the Barnstormers, and some summer camps.

DSL access by FairPoint will be available in the near future, a service expected to be much faster than Tamworth Wireless can provide.

Properties for Sale

Peggy Johnson's and Tom Daley's properties have been listed

Permanent Protection Planning Task Force report and discussion

Task Force and Its Work

Doug reported that 11 members had held nine meetings and read 151 documents generated by 14 organizations.

Survey of the Community

Maura King reported on the survey. The task force sent 140 surveys, and 40 were returned, 50% by owners who held protected properties. Of those who answered the question "would you be

interested in putting some or all of your land in to some form of permanent protection?" the answers were divided as follows: 11 yes, 10 no, 5 maybe, and 8 already had done so.

Besides yes-and-no answers, there was space for free text comments. Some interesting issues raised in the comments included the effect of protection on resale value, impact of various actions on heirs, the role of hunting, and the impact on the tax base affecting the whole town, not just the local preserved area. Denney suggested getting George Lamprey, appraiser, to talk with PPP about the effect of covenants and easements on property values.

Information Gathering and Laroche/Berry program at Wonalancet Chapel

David White reported on the program:

Don Berry is President of the Lakes Region Conservation Trust, and Roger Laroche is Executive Director of the Squam Lakes Conservation Society. They led a lively and informative meeting.

Among the major points were:

- A conservation easement is legally binding
- A set of rights are ceded by landowners to a Land Trust which holds those rights forever
- An easement can be sold or given. Most Land Trusts don't have the money to purchase so a fundraising campaign can be undertaken
- Certain rights can be maintained; flexible terms can be the key to making an agreement possible
- The primary goal is generally to protect open space and prevent development
- There must be a public benefit (e.g., view, clean air, clean water, habitat, recreation)
- For a donor's monetary benefit, the process must be carefully documented and indisputable
- Historic Preservation easement is another tool, especially for buildings

Hengen Site Visit and Consultation on Historic Designation for Wonalancet

Liz Hengen, a NH historic preservation consultant, visited Wonalancet for a tour and discussion of possible next steps with Doug, David White, and Nancy Stearns. She noted that Wonalancet was "absolutely eligible" for preservation status and identified different paths to that designation: Preservation Easement, Neighborhood Heritage District, and National Historic District. Thinking of Wonalancet as a "village easement" would be a new approach. She described our landscape as "overwhelming" in its beauty and distinctiveness.

Liz identified the critical importance for cost-saving and knowledge base of having a local person who is committed to the effort and willing to provide the leg-work of data gathering.

She referred to the historic preservation efforts at both Chocorua and Squam Lakes as nearby examples of different visions, both ultimately very successful.

MOTION: To thank the PPP Committee for its hard work (Ian Cooke, Joe Semmes)

The motion passed unanimously.

An Action Plan for Wonalancet

To start the discussion Doug read the Preamble of the WPA Bylaws and presented the following action steps that constitute the plan:

- Survey of plants, animals and soil
- Working map of Wonalancet with GIS technology
- Standing Land Protection Committee and a prioritized list of properties at risk
- Expand and improve wonalancet.org website (John Waite reporting)
- Application for National Historic District designation – pros and cons
- Fund Raising Campaign, with estimated budget

Ensuing discussion included the following comments, questions, observations:

- Wonalancet is what it is for DIRT: good soil leads to thriving agriculture
- Start with geology and soil, move to flora and fauna
- NH is losing its farms and fields
- Need to consider viability for farming of properties as we prioritize for preservation efforts
- Milkweed proliferation makes agriculture difficult – should WPA commit money to eradicate?
- But these issues are complicated – for example milkweed is a favored food of a beloved local species: the Monarch Butterfly, and a critical food for the bees that pollinate many crops.
- Need to be patient with this process, and build consensus along the way
- No. Let's get going *now*, people will like it when they see it in place
- Getting a map done gives us a baseline
- Will WPA try to restrict GMOs? Some altered genes can spread into the wild.
- Which steps will come first? The Board recommends 'organizational Darwinism': those action steps that attract people's energy will move ahead sooner.
- Will our properties be enhanced or diminished in value with easements?
- Our easements become more attractive to land trusts because of WMNF & nearby conserved land
- “If all my neighbors protect their land, I'd be a fool to do it too.”
- Refinancing of Wonalancet property appraised much lower after 2008
- Our older children should be on WPA mailing list

MOTION: To approve the *Action Plan* with certain modifications, including the addition of a seventh action step “to aid preservation of Wonalancet's soils, fields, agricultural heritage and community”.

(Frumie Selchen, Denney Morton)

The motion passed.

Moving Ahead

- Recruit interested people with special expertise – look to Plymouth State, local land trusts, et al.
- Standing Land Protection Committee – David White volunteered to chair this committee
- Agriculture – Paul King volunteered to lead this effort
- Historic District – volunteer needed
- Map – volunteer needed
- Website – John Waite has the design basics done, but will need lots of others to provide content
- Fund Raising – the Board must assume responsibility and present a plan in 2014
- Natural Resources Inventory – volunteer needed, the names of some Wonalancet experts in this area were suggested

Other Business

- Sunnyfield Bakery was recently featured on NH Chronicle
- The Wonalancet Out Door Club's potluck and meeting is next week
- The Semmeses want to brainstorm ideas for a 2014 bicentennial of the Wonalancet Farm
- Can WPA “Rapid Response Fund” be repurposed? Yes, if the money is spent for a purpose specified in our bylaws.

Doug adjourned the meeting at 9 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Stearns, Secretary