

**Richmond Conservation Commission**  
Meeting Minutes for December 9, 2014  
Town Center Meeting Room, 203 Bridge Street

Attended by: Ernie Buford (Chair), Andy Solomon (notes), Rick Barrett, Bob Low, Judy Rosovsky, Elizabeth Wright  
Guests: Brad Elliott, Mary Houle

**Approval of minutes:** Minutes from the prior meeting were reviewed and approved.

**Conservation Reserve Fund (CRF):**

Houle asked where the CRF application was located, and she was directed to the town web site.

In order to avoid conflict of interest, Low recused himself from deliberations and voting about potential CRF use for Gillett Pond but remained available to provide information about his knowledge of and involvement with efforts to preserve the pond.

Elliott indicated that a purchase and sale agreement for the dam and adjoining land had been reached between Richmond Land Trust and the Girl Scouts. Some funds have been raised, and additional fundraising will be required to complete the sale by the end of January. He reports that the only limiting issue for the sale at this point is adequate funding. He reported that the purchase includes 88 acres, including a portion of the pond itself, adjoining land and rights to the dam, all at a cost of approximately \$1000 per acre including closing costs. Elliott said the Conservation Commission (CC) should expect a CRF application to support the effort to preserve Gillett Pond.

Low indicated that, given the imminent timing of the purchase and sale, the application for CRF funding would likely address dam repair rather than the sale itself (unless the purchase and sale date is extended).

Low discussed the history of Gillett Pond and current access, and indicated that input from many citizens and state legislators was received by the state. He indicated that the goals of the purchase would be conservation of the land and guaranteed public access. Low asked what might be required for any application for funding to be used toward Gillett Pond.

Barrett requested additional information about the importance of Gillett Pond to the surrounding communities that might be considered with a CRF application. He requested Biofinder information on the property and indicated that a letter from Sandra Ferry, Aimee Motta, and information on ongoing and potential educational uses from Richmond and Huntington School systems might be helpful.

The CC discussed the Science to Action project and its relevance to Gillett Pond.

Barrett asked if there would be a penalty if the current purchase and sale agreement fell through, i.e. if there was risk if fundraising failed to raise sufficient funds by the end of January. Low indicated it would be reasonable to specify that if the agreement fell through, CRF funds would be returned in full.

Elliott commented that approximately half of required funds for purchase had been raised, and Low indicated significant contributions on the day of the meeting.

Buford asked about expectations for dam repairs. Low indicated state inspectors suggested that it may be 2 years before the dam needs repair. He also noted the arrival of beaver in the area and that, should a beaver dam become established, this might be of concern given state regulations regarding removal of beaver dams.

Solomon asked the estimate for dam repair. Low stated that the state engineer estimated repair would cost approximately \$200,000, but local construction companies have expressed interest in donating labor and time. There has been no estimate obtained yet for the repair by a contractor.

Buford asked about potential consequences if RLT were to transfer the dam and surrounding land, after purchase, to the state. He questioned if the dam would be maintained in this instance, and by whom.

Barrett and Wright questioned if it was appropriate to use the CRF for dam repair and if this is congruent with the goal of preserving the pond as a natural resource. Rosovsky indicated she felt such was the case. CC members discussed how a stipulation might be made, were CRF money to be used for dam repair, that whoever owns the dam thereafter will continue its maintenance.

Houle noted in her own personal experience involving a land transaction with the state and federal government it was not possible to preserve requested trees and structures and she expressed concern that there would be little interest in preserving the dam should it be transferred to the state.

Rosovsky noted that different state agencies may have different perspectives on maintenance of the dam, such as Forest and Parks. It was mentioned that Sue Morse had expressed concern about the impact on wildlife habitats of dam removal.

Wright questioned the need for Town funds if fundraising is going so well, but she noted that she liked the idea of the town investing in the pond and indicated that it makes a statement of the town's values. Barrett thought using CRF might further guarantee public access. Solomon indicated that given the apparent, robust, local community support for Gillett Pond, this might be a good use of town funds, and might also aid in re-authorization of the CRF for another 5 years on Town Meeting Day.

Other points of discussion included timing of the proposal relative to Town Meeting Day and the idea of an endowment for dam maintenance. Low announced his return to normal status at the conclusion of Gillett Pond discussion.

Brief consideration of preparations for upcoming vote on the CRF – need for outreach, including flyers and informational meetings, Front Porch Forum and possibly an article for Times Ink. CC members discussed public meeting locations and times to discuss the CRF. Solomon stated he would arrange for a location and date on a Thursday in February for a public meeting.

**Science to Action outreach and education:** Judy Rosovsky noted she was continuing to work on an upcoming presentation by Sue Morris.

**Gateway zoning:** Members discussed the upcoming public meeting about Richmond Gateway zoning changes, and if it was appropriate for the CC to take a position on these changes. The group agreed that more information would be available after the public meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup>, and several members indicated their intent to attend this meeting and would report back to the group.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.