

Public Meeting
Freedom Conservation Commission and Forest Advisory Committee
Tuesday November 18, 2025 - 6:30 pm at the Freedom Town Hall
Minutes

1 Quorum Check, Roll Call FAC/FCC - The meeting was called to order at 6:31 pm by Jeff Nicoll. Present are:

FAC – Paul Elie, Ron Newbury, Gary Williams-Selectboard Rep., James Guido-Planning Board Rep

FCC – Jeff Nicoll, Megan Broderick, R.A. Oram, Nancy Cristoferi, Susan Marks, Sue Hoople

Dave George, Scrub Oak Scramblers is also present.

R.A. Oram is the FCC rep to the FAC.

2 Approval of October 2025 FAC/FCC Meeting Minutes - a correction on line 35 McVitty is spelled wrong. Line 102 – correct members of the public Doug and Jeanne Greenland. Line 131 – correct spelling of Jeanne. Line 94 – should be of not off. Line 81 – do not have to come to the FCC. Line 106 – There WAS a discrepancy. Line 116 – Oram is disgusted with the inaction of the state and the town. Susan “feels” in the next line. Line 33 Trout Pond water will be tested next summer. Line 49 – 13 of 14 forest gates have been repainted. The gate at Trout Pond Trail and Black Brook needs painting.

FCC & FAC - Jeff made a motion to approve as amended, Nancy seconded.
APPROVED

FAC

3 Annual Forest Inspection – done on October 31. Alexa came down with a forest ranger from Coos County. Everyone met in Barry’s office, then went on a tour of the forest. The tour was approximately 3 hours. SOS was doing some mowing of the trails while the tour was happening. No report has been received from Alexa yet. A final report will be submitted to Alexa, a draft was presented at the time of the tour.

4 Forest Capital Reserve Account – Timber cut frequency has been gradually declining. In order to replenish the funds to continue, the idea of a capital reserve account was broached. The land use tax provided funds in the past 6 years, a total of \$24000. With the decline in the forest cuts and the land use tax dropping off, the funds could end up drained at some point in the future. Jeff has drafted a justification letter for the Selectboard. The FAC needs to recommend to the FCC, who can then draft a warrant article for inclusion in the Annual Meeting for a vote by the Town. Megan notes that it might be helpful if Barry could share information about what has happened in the past 20 years with the forest. The timber harvests that have been the historical funding for the forest. They are happening less frequently and the activities that they are including are of less value than they were in the past. Our revenue is less but the maintenance cost is greater. We have legally binding responsibilities under the easement. Maintenance costs have significantly increased. Annual appropriations are not stable and will not account for another large maintenance project. Other towns use capital reserve funds in this way for their forests. Oram spoke about the warrant article process. One of the variables is that the work that was done this year could all be undone with a couple of rainstorms. Jeff would like the amount to be a baseline to maintain the work that has been done, as well as some money for the next big project that needs to be done. Dave George spoke about Trout Pond Road being a public road. You would have to ask the easement holder to modify the document, as well as having the town accept it as a town road. A draft warrant article was prepared by Jeff for the purpose of this discussion this evening. This will be fine-tuned at the December meeting. Jim asked if it is possible to shift Trout Pond Road to the road agent to have them take care of it. The land use tax will never exceed \$15000 to FAC in any given year. Paul is suggesting that the distribution of the land use funds could be reverted to the 50/50 split that was originally in place. Oram issued the request in order to make a sustainable program. Megan spoke about outside options that other towns use to fund their forests. Oram notes that if they are commercial ventures, they are not allowed.

5 Tree Cutting (Freedom Fire Department) - Chief Cunio had a concern about getting the fire trucks into Trout Pond – there are some trees that need to be cut. There is a problem with access for the fire tanker. This subject was

broached with Alexa when the forest tour/meeting was held. The plan is to cut them down very low, cover the stumps with dirt if need be. There are only 4 trees that need to be cut. Tree cutting is part of the Fire Dept. training program. Chief Cunio has indicated that he will take care of it, and will let the FAC know when they will be doing it. Dave George notes that SOS is able to cut the trees, and they have a stump grinder. The cost would be next to nothing. They may need some fill where the stumps are.

6 Forest Land Use Proposal Review – SOS presented their annual request to hold their Winter Carnival. There was an issue with the contact information on the form, it was listing Janet Johnson’s email as the contact. Dave would like to modify the application to be for one event, between the 14th of February until March 7th. James made a motion to amend the application as requested. Gary asked about insurance for the event. Dave explained what they have in place. Gary seconded the motion – APPROVED

Paul notes that the form indicates it needs to be received by the third Wednesday of the month. Should this be changed? Most items need to be in 1 week prior to the meeting. Gary made a motion to make the change, James seconded. APPROVED

7 FAC Invoices - none

FAC/FCC Joint

8 FAC/FCC Budget and Encumbrances – A proposed budget was distributed for consideration. Oram questions how much the FCC has for expenditures after the aquatic invasives and town forest are removed. He notes that as a taxpayer, seeing the amounts in the special funds would make him ask why a capital reserve is needed.

Hours/costs for the part time position were discussed. The number will remain the same for next year.

The operating budget will be held flat.

The NH Lakes dues used to come out of the aquatic invasives line, but now shows in the dues line. This dues line will be raised to \$550, the aquatic invasives number will be decreased by \$300. \$450 will be remaining in the aquatics line.

Meeting and training will be left as is.

Water testing – only the lakes portion was in the 2026 proposal. The rivers program was not included. Megan recommends \$6500 for this. Oram expressed the need for consideration of the fact that Americorps will no longer be part of the Green Mountain programs. Will the billing increase due to the need for hiring people? If anything happens that will affect our water testing, we need to build it in. Megan will confirm with Jill about the effect of Americorps not being available.

Aquatic invasives will be reduced to \$450, as the membership to NH Lakes was moved to the dues line.

Oram brought concerns about funding for repairs to the road if they are necessary. James feels that we should budget \$3500 for the maintenance number. The forest maintenance line is a transfer from the town forest maintenance account. Currently there is approximately \$2000 in there. The article will have to be edited to state that it will be withdrawn from some other account. There are two options – capital reserve and/or warrant article funded by taxation. The group decided that forest maintenance should be put in at \$3500.

Town forester – the budget process will be corrected this year to align with the forester contract (May 1 – April 30). The land use tax funds would be used to cover the first four months to get this into the appropriate cycle. Funds will be encumbered to cover January through April of 2026. Any activities that are cut related should be charged to the commission, and not in the town forester line. Stewardship plan update funding needs to be included. An assessment from Natural Resources as to what they are looking for in the update will assist in coming up with the number needed for that project. It is suggested to go with the \$8000 number. James mentioned asking the forester what he thinks is needed for a budget. He could submit a cost analysis with his proposed work. We will ask Barry for a quote for next year.

Road repairs – this year was a large one. There are no other trails/roads on the hitlist for next year. Some of the growth on some of the roads need to be addressed, but this would be under the maintenance budget. Gary recommends putting \$1200 to \$1500 in for gravel where the stumps are removed/ground. A warrant article for fire safety at Trout Pond should be written for this purpose.

Controlled burn – right now this is not looking like it will be happening. We do not have a signed contract for this, so it cannot be encumbered. The Nature Conservancy is not taking on projects at this time. It is recommended to not put a number in this line. We should ask the forester for an assessment.

9 Other Business / Public Comment / Adjourn – Ron will lock the gate once hunting season is over (December 8). Paul would like permission from the Board to talk to Barry about talking to the commission regarding the upcoming timber sale. There was a contract in place in the past. Oram made a motion to give permission to Paul to deal with Barry on the cut, James seconded. APPROVED

Ron made a motion to adjourn the FAC portion of the meeting at 8:27 pm, Gary seconded. ADJOURNED

Milfoil account – request has been submitted to the State, bid requests have been sent and are due back to the State in December. The State will give us a budget number after that is received. Use the same number as last year, and we will have the answer in January.

NH Lakes – go in with the same number we used this year. A letter has been drafted for Ossipee and Effingham asking them to get back on board with the program, and that if they cannot provide funding, please provide volunteer staffing.

FCC

Jeff made a motion to reorder the agenda items, to take item 12 and move it to the place of #10, Oram seconded. APPROVED

12 FOIA – Right to Know Request - Wabanaki – a letter was received from Mark Salvati, a Right to Know request – all minutes, agendas, emails, texts etc. from member, including alternates. We also have a memorandum from the town regarding this, explaining the criteria for the personal email they are requesting. This needs to be complied with by November 20. Instructions are included in that memo. Oram would like to know if the Planning Board and the ZBA received the same request. Jeff will ask the

question. Oram feels that if they have not requested from the other Boards, it would be an inference that this Board has something. Jeff will send an email reminder to the group and will request a response. The floor was opened to the members of the public that are present regarding the Wabanaki issues. They have no comments at this time.

10 NHACC Annual Conference – Oram reported on this conference. He feels that Lakes puts on a better conference than the NH Conservation Commission did. It was informative, but the caliber was not anything that members of this Board would have gotten much out of. It was an excellent facility, food was fine, but the topics were lacking and speakers were not that good. They used to produce a handbook that explained quite a few things, but it has not been updated in a number of years. He feels like there are less people in conservation commissions overall. Oram commented on the age of the attendees. Anything that happens on the water must be passed through the Governor and the Executive Council.

11 Aquatics / Lake Host Update – mentioned in the budget session. Letters have been drafted for Ossipee and Effingham asking them to re-engage with the Tri-Town Committee. The ask is that if they don't have cash, that they commit to providing some volunteers. Nancy and Megan are looking for approval to send the letters to Ossipee and Effingham. Megan made a motion to send the letters, Oram seconded. APPROVED Megan will formalize them, then send to Jeff to be sent out under the FCC.

13 FCC Invoices – request to reimburse from Paul Elie, for 2 registrations to the NHACC Conference (2@\$60 each, RA Oram and Paul Elie) plus mileage (124 miles) total of \$ 206.80. This will come out of the meetings budget. Megan made a motion to approve the reimbursement in the amount of \$206.80, Nancy seconded. APPROVED Discussion was held regarding increasing the budget line for meetings. The line will be increased to \$400.

Vote on SOS land use agreement – Oram made a motion to approve, Nancy seconded. APPROVED

* application needs to be updated with correct email contact

14 Other business to come before the Commission

15 Public Comment

16 Adjourn – Oram made a motion to adjourn at 9:11pm, Nancy seconded. The meeting was adjourned.

Note: Deadline for agenda items for this meeting closed at 12pm on 11/11/2025

Respectfully submitted,
Melissa Donaldson
Recording Secretary