TOWN OF RYE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Tuesday, January 6, 2024 5:30 p.m. Rye Town Hall

Commission Present: Chair Suzanne McFarland, Vice-Chair Sally King, Clerk Susan Shepcaro, Mike Garvan, Joe Tucker, Karen Oliver, Jeff Gardner, and Paula Mahoney

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair McFarland called the public hearing to order at 5:30 p.m.

II. SEATING OF ALTERNATES

None

III. PUBLIC HEARING

The purpose of the hearing is to hear public comment on the future plans of the Junkins Family Conservation Land, 0 Pioneer Road, Map 022, Lot 073

Tracey Degnan, Rockingham County Conservation District (RCCD), 41 Park Ridge Ave., noted that she has worked with the Rye Conservation Commission for over twenty years and has brokered several land protection deals for the Town. Many of the land protection deals end in protection of property with it being owned by the Town with a conservation easement by RCCD; such as, the Town Forest and Goss Farm. There are also many other open space parcels in town that do not have conservation easements. Depending upon the resources that are found on those parcels, it can enhance access opportunities or not. For example, the Sleeper parcel on West Road is a wetland parcel that was protected. The parcel has a lot of wetland complexes and is not a good place for access, nor is it a good place for access because of its position on West Road. The Brown Lane Farm property has good access, so a small appropriate parking lot was created to allow people to park offsite. She pointed out that they would not recommend parking on sensitive resources; however, on certain sites it might make sense. Ms. Degnan continued that she knows the Pioneer Road parcel. Along that stretch of Route 1A, there can be an appropriate access point and it can be made in an appropriate size to accommodate a few people. She pointed out that RCCD is doing a lot of restoration work in the area of Seavey Creek. There are a lot of people who use Seavey Creek. She thinks the opportunity for people to be able to go to the property, walk the site, and connect to the Seavey parcel, which has an easement and is directly adjacent, would be great.

Hugh Lee, 220 Pioneer Road, read from documents submitted to the Conservation Commission. (*Please see attached documents.*)

Sent: Sunday, February 4, 2024 5:55 PM **To:** suzanne.ryeconservation@gmail.com

Subject: Public Hearing Tuesday 5:30pm either zoom or in person

Once again, the Rye conservation commission needs your help.

We are having a public hearing this Tuesday from 5:30-6:30, to discuss access to the Junkins Family Conservation Land acquired in 2022 located next to the fishing bridge (Brackett and Pioneer). Picture attached. It is the only conservation land with access to 370' of water frontage on Seavey Creek. When the Selectboard and Conservation agreed to purchase this property it was with the intention to allow access for the public.

Meeting ID: 823 1076 0141

TOWN OF RYE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

NOTICE OF MEETING TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2024 5:30 p.m. Rye Town Hall & Via Zoom

Password: 124420 Call-in Number: 646-558-8656

https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82310760141?pwd=BsQal4FOpsC89UUQv5e4nkj0vUHa70.1&from=addon

AGENDA

- I. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
- II. SEATING OF ALTERNATES
- III. PUBLIC HEARING

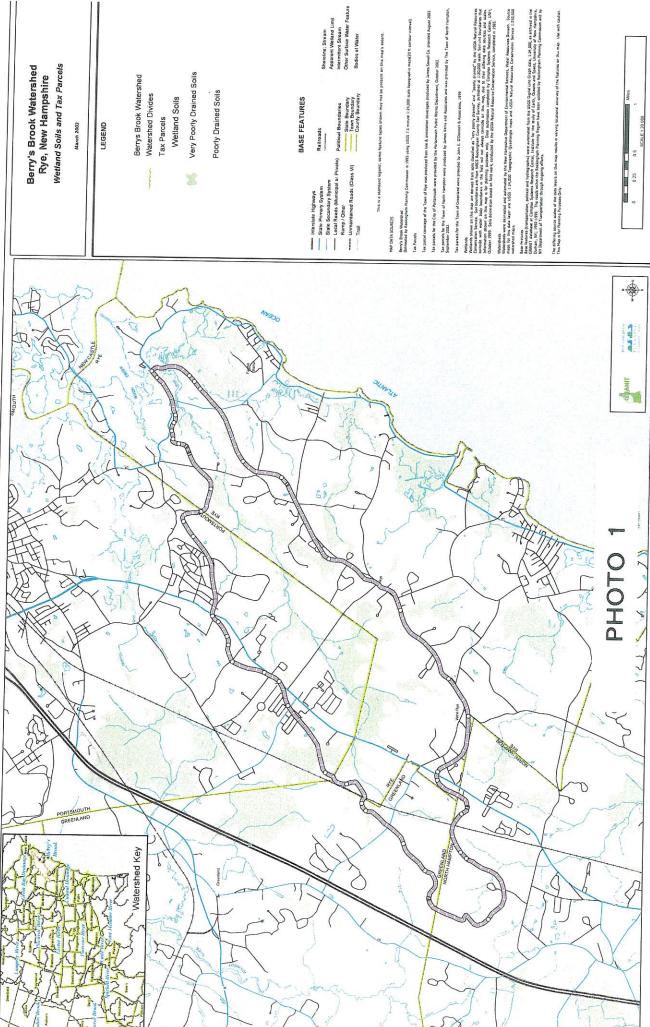
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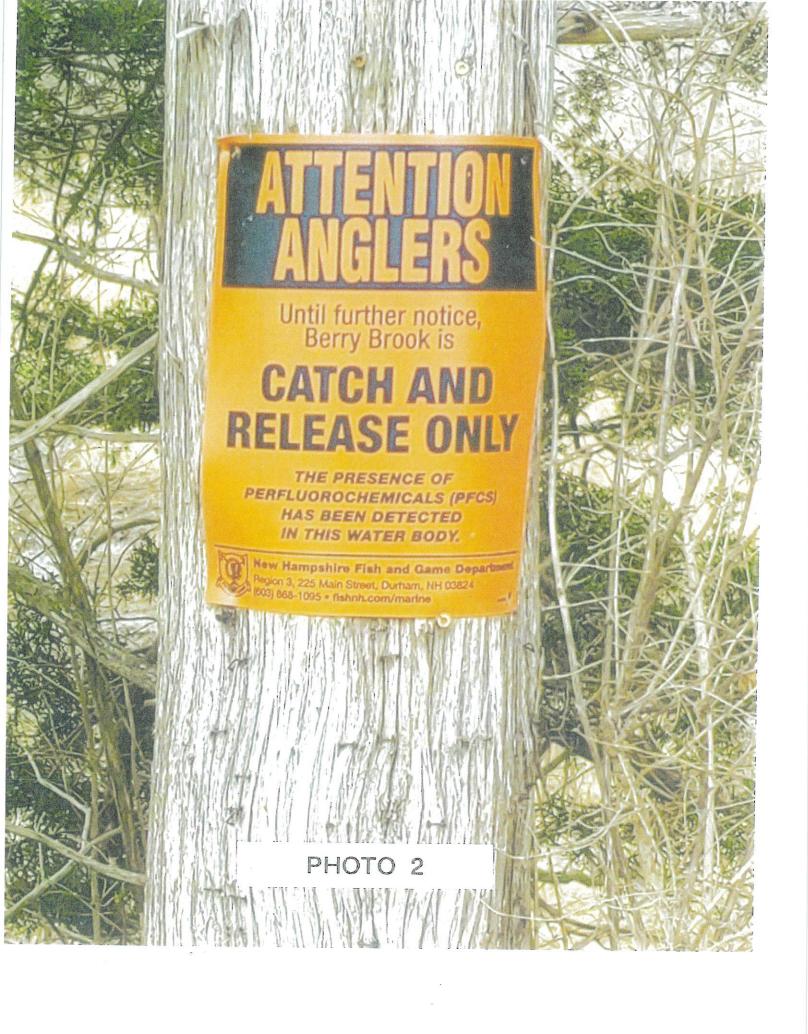
IV. OTHER BUSINESS

ADJOURNMENT

Suzanne McFarland

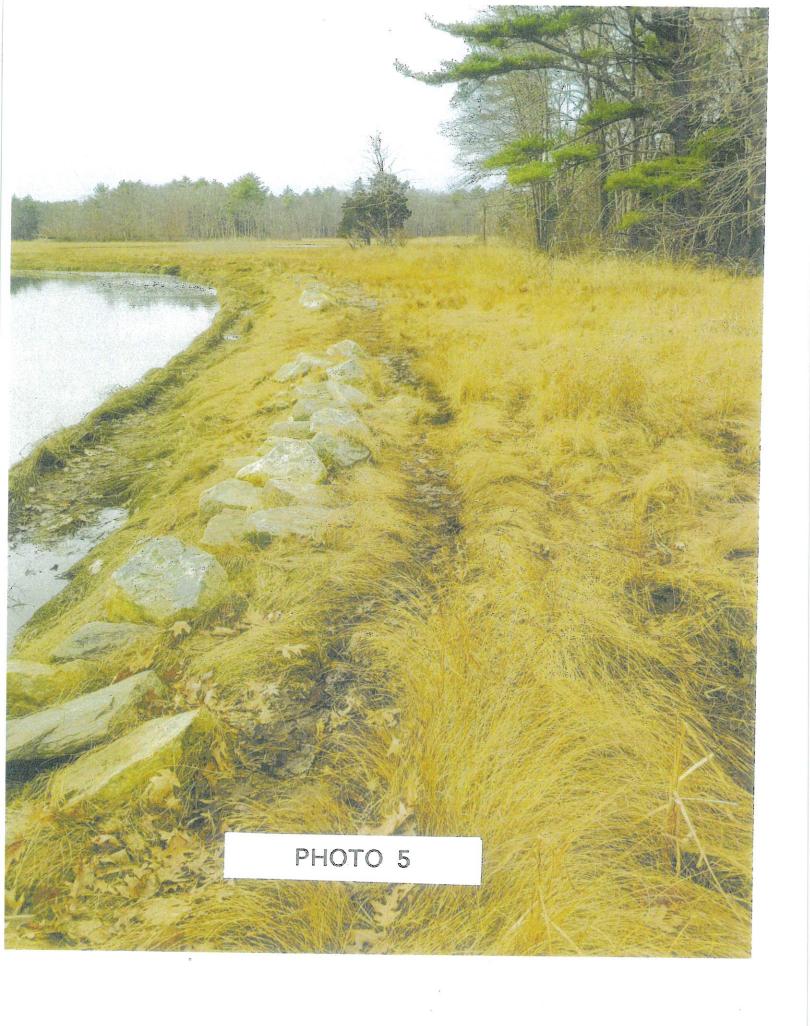
Suzanne.RyeConservation@gmail.com

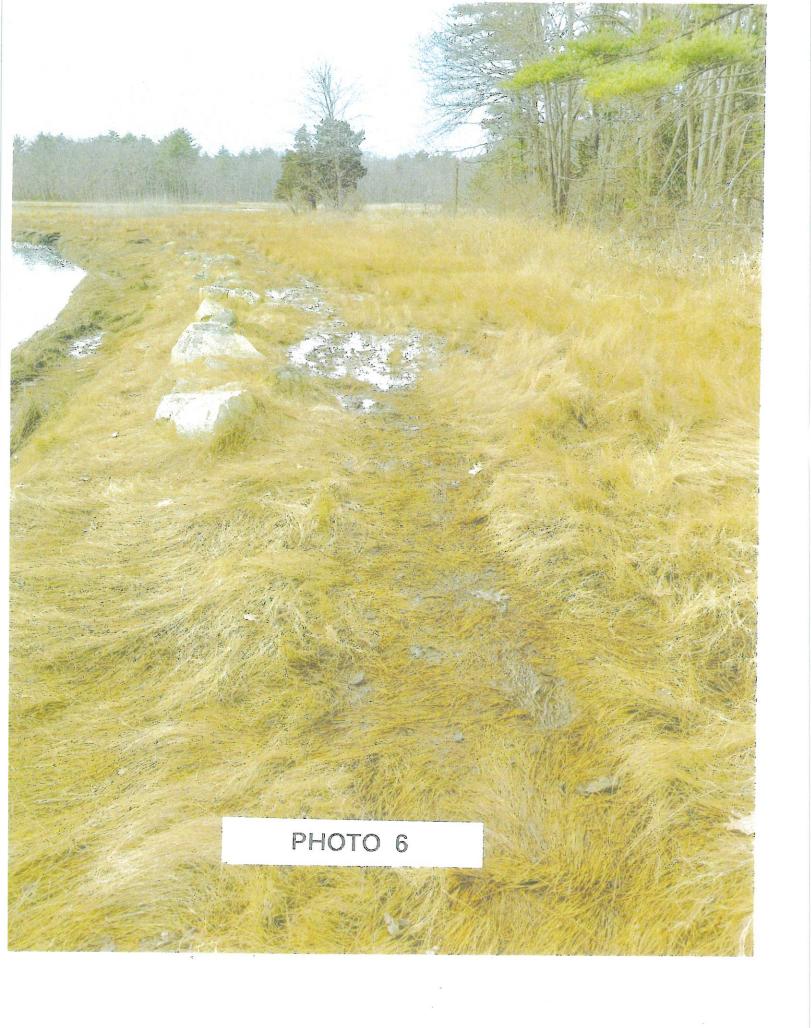






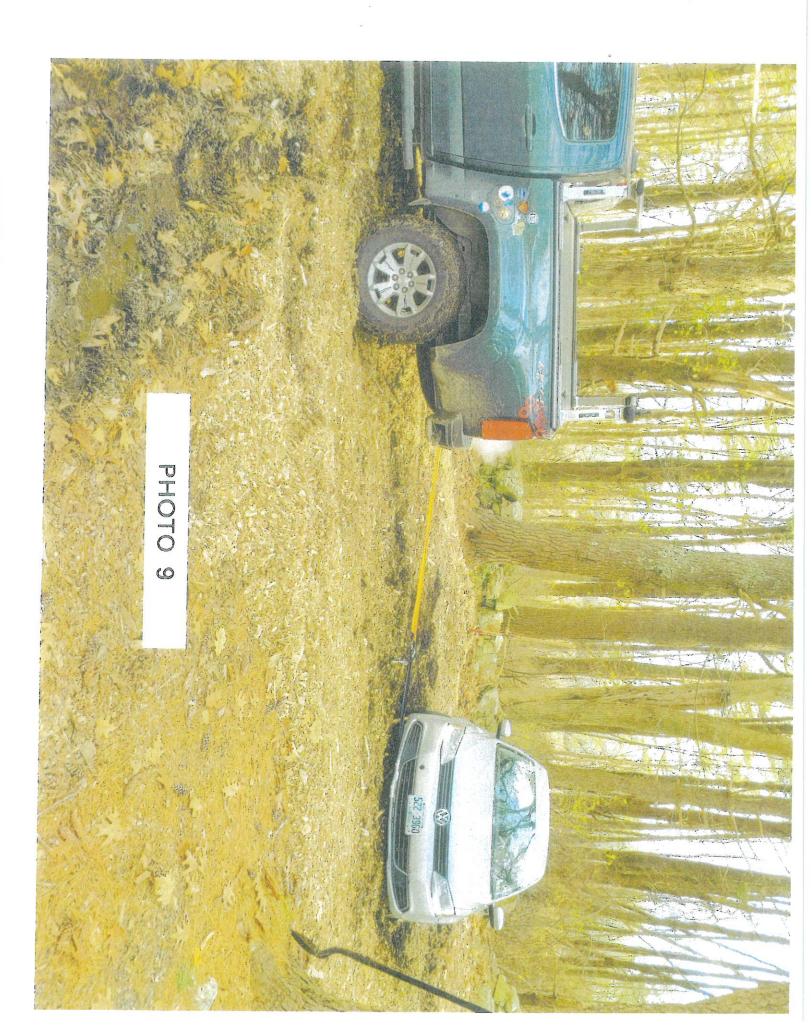
















Rye Conservation Commission 10 Central Road Rye, NH 03870

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Respectfully,

Name: Charlie Patter
Charlie Patter
Address: 306 pioneer road

Rye Conservation Commission 10 Central Road Rye, NH 03870

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Respectfully,

Name: Alexandra Boorman

Address: 200 Pioneer Road, Rye, NH

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Name:

SEAN MACDONALD

Address:

21 BIRCHWOOD DR

RYE

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Respectfully,

Definerence.

256 Grove Road, Rye, NH

Rye Conservation Commission 10 Central Road Rye, NH 03870

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Respectfully,

Andree Cornell

Name:

Address:

240 washington 15

Rye Conservation Commission 10 Central Road Rye, NH 03870

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Name:

-DocuSigned by:

Bill Eragun Address:

12 Morgan Court, Rye, NH

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Name:

-DocuSigned by:

Address:

John Williamson

400 Washington Road, Rye, NH

Rye Conservation Commission 10 Central Road Rye, NH 03870

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Address:

Keper Connell 240 washingto as

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Name:

Stephen Hennigar

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Address:

487 Brackett Rd Rye, NH 03870

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Address:

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Name:

--- DocuSigned by:

38 Grove

Road, Rye, NH

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Name:

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Address:

245 Washington Road, Rye, NH

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aswell

Respectfully,

--- DocuSigned by:

Address:889422...

328 Washington Road, Rye, NH

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Respectfully,

Veter Zohdi
Address:
4 winslow way
Rye MH

Rye Conservation Commission 10 Central Road Rye, NH 03870

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Address:

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Rowan Patter

Address: 306 pioneer road

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Address: 37 Oble Rawl Port Mye

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Jahrnyla Poel

Rye Conservation Commission 10 Central Road Rye, NH 03870

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Name:

-DocuSigned by:

Tom Saltonstall Address:

4 Rand's Lane, Rye, NH

Rye Conservation Commission 10 Central Road Rye, NH 03870

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Kim+Rob Berry Address: 21 Brackett Road, Rye

Rye Conservation Commission 10 Central Road Rye, NH 03870

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Name:

Johanna Silkowski

Address:

120 Garland Road, Rye, NH

Rye Conservation Commission 10 Central Road Rye, NH 03870

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Name:

Zachariah U. Malpass

Address:

120 Gariand Road, Rye, NH

Rye Conservation Commission 10 Central Road Rve. NH 03870

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Name: Julie Tucker

Address: 960 Wasfington Rd

Rye Conservation Commission 10 Central Road Rye, NH 03870

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DocuSigned by:

Judy Wall

TITANEBATBCAD24443...

4 Myrica Avenue

Rye, NH

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John Fredette

395 Washington Road, Rye

Rye Conservation Commission 10 Central Road Rye, NH 03870

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7-4E1543P8F521499.

285 Grove Road

Rye, NH

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Name:

Sylvia Mauro

Address:

42 Washington Rd, Unit 4 Rye NH 03870

Sylvia Mauro 1/29/2024

Rye Conservation Commission 10 Central Road Rye, NH 03870

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4 Myrica Ave

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Name:

Monica ?

mc Carthu

Address:

100 Straws Point Taye. NH 03870

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Name:

SLETT REINSTEIN

Address:

Ke Johnson DD

Rye Conservation Commission 10 Central Road Rye, NH 03870

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The O Pioneer Road conservation lot is one of the more unique and sensitive ecosystems in Rye and indeed all of NH. It is one of the 6 contiguous prioritized habitats, it is the highest ranked wildlife habitat in the state, is part of the wildlife corridor and it abuts the town of Rye's only Class 3 stream, Berry Brook.

The land has a history of moderate use from fly fisherman(October-May) and kayakers/paddle boarders (June-October) during a couple of hours <u>at high tide</u>, which is an appropriate use. Currently the lot has access along Brackett Road from the state right of way at the bridge and across the property of 3 Brackett Road for both fisherman and watercraft launching. There is also access from the parking area at Seavy Acres conservation lot and the Odiorne Point boat launch.

It is my opinion that developing this sensitive land into a parking lot is an inappropriate use of the land and taxpayer money. During a period when much of the seacoast is being over developed and crowded, the RCC would better serve this land and the community by protecting it from development and overuse. Furthermore, any curb cut encouraging turning and entering traffic on Pioneer Road would create an additional traffic and safety hazard on what is arguably the most dangerous road in Rye.

Given that this land already has adequate access that has historically met the needs of those who recreate on it, I would be strongly opposed to the RCC to spending taxpayer money on any development for parking on this lot. Doing so would put undue pressure on this fragile resource and create an additional safety hazard to all those who use Pioneer Road for travel and recreation.

Respectfully,

Name:

Rob Brady

Address:

85 Brackett Road Rye, NH 03870

Rye Conservation Commission 10 Central Road Rye, NH 03870

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Respectfully,

Name:

Rebert Patton

Address:

306 PIONEERRD RYR NH 03870

Rye Conservation Commission 10 Central Road Rye, NH 03870

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Name: seun Macdonald

Address:

21 BIRCHWOOD DR. RYE, NA 03870

A member of the public commented that he would've expected this to start with a presentation as to what is being done to the property.

Chair McFarland replied that this project started back in 2022. The RCC held a public hearing and went through the process. It was an open process. It just seems that of late, when the property was being surveyed, people became aware. She noted that RCC had a listening session and there was discussion about the parking area. This project has been in the annual report, the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP), and there have been two public hearings, with this hearing being the third. She pointed out that the process was followed and the property was aquired in April of 2022. She further explained that the deed was wrong, which took a year to fix. After that time, RCC was allowed to start the process with NH Department of Transportation (NH DOT). The concept has always been to have access to this area; flat, easy, access.

Vice-Chair King noted that the access will accommodate people with mobility issues, as not everyone can go down the hill that's on Jeff Keefe's property.

Chair McFarland pointed out that not everyone can do the Seavey entrance.

Mr. Lee submitted photos of the following: view of property from November 7th and the number of vehicles parked at the property; photos of parking area at the adjacent Seavey parcel; and a view of trash on the Seavey parcel.

Ritchie White, 30 Lang Road, spoke about NH RSA 36-A that allows municipalities to establish a conservation commission "for the proper utilization and protection of the natural resources and for the protection of watershed resources of said city or town." He recommended that the RCC not encourage public access. He pointed out there are critical wetlands there that have already been impacted and it does not need additional impact. It's a critical area that should be protected instead of used. The primary goal of the Conservation Commission should be the habitat. This is unique and critical habitat, and saltmarsh, which should be protected.

Michael Thiel, 34 Brackett Road, noted that right now, there is adequate parking for the fishermen who fish in this area, which is a popular area for fishermen. They don't seem to have any trouble accessing the area with the current access that exists. There are approximately six parking spots. In thinking about the embankment that's available to the fishermen, they all want to fish upstream from the area that RCC is talking about having access to. That's a very wooded area and is about three hundred yards long. He pointed out that fishermen don't like to be elbow to elbow with other fishermen. There's actually a natural ability of controlling the amount of access. It's somewhat difficult to access the area now, and there's access for about a half dozen cars. He continued that RCC seemingly wants to provide access for kayakers. If that's the case, it'll be setting up a huge conflict situation, because there's nothing that goes worse together than kayakers and fishermen. He pointed out that Fish and Game spend a lot of money stocking the creek so the fishermen can fish. It's a limited resource for fishermen and they are already

impacting it to a certain extent. The property doesn't need more impact. It certainly doesn't need people dragging kayaks down to the water.

Chair McFarland noted that RCC can't tell kayakers that they can't access the area.

Mr. Thiel commented that this particular part of Berry's Brook is only accessible at hightide. Any other time it's pretty useless for kayak access. He can't imagine why RCC feels the need to put in a parking lot to provide kayak access. This would also be putting more pressure on it than already exists, which is probably not good for the stream. It's already somewhat limited by the fact that there's limited parking. The parking shouldn't be expanded because the fishermen won't even appreciate having that much pressure on it.

Rob Patten, 306 Pioneer Road, stated that with his experience on the zoning board, he thinks it can pretty much be called a parking lot. The gravel is impervious on any application that comes through the zoning board. It should be called impervious, just like pavement. He continued that his children won't ride their bikes down to the access at the Seavey parcel because there are what they describe as "very strange people" out there who appear to be homeless.

Chair McFarland noted that at the listening session that was held, there were concerns about this issue. RCC had the people who had concerns speak to Police Chief Kevin Walsh and the Commission also contacted him. There are ways to protect that from happening, and RCC thinks that's important, which is to put up signage for "no parking from dusk to dawn." If that is done, the Police Department is allowed to enforce it.

Mr. Patten stated that if the RCC wishes to preserve the natural beauty of the property, leave it alone. Right now, there's access both from Odiorne Point and the bridge. He doesn't see a deficiency in access and doesn't see a need for this. He certainly doesn't see why the Town's budget should be impacted by the addition of a parking lot to access an area where there is already so much access. He pointed out that almost thirty percent of the Town is already conserved and a lot of it has access. He doesn't think it's an appropriate use of funds and hopes that this does not happen.

Jeff Keefe, 3 Brackett Road, spoke in regard to available access to Seavey Creek from conservation land. He noted that the land is an important piece of land. It's one of the six contiguous prioritized habitats. It's the highest ranked wildlife habitat in the State. It's part of the wildlife corridor and abuts Rye's only Class III street. He understands it was a quick decision to buy the land. However, he doesn't understand how it makes sense to make a decision on use of that property prior to even buying it. It was said that RCC bought the land with that assumption of developing it for parking and water access. He doesn't know how RCC can make that decision without a good assessment of the property. Mr. Keefe continued that the property is primarily used by fly fishermen. In terms of access for fly fishermen, the access is ideal as it is. If more parking is put in, there will be more fishermen and more pressure on the resource. He thinks that a parking lot could be put on that property; however, it comes down to whether it's an appropriate use for that land. He doesn't think it is. He thinks the resource that RCC was

trying to protect when the land was bought is too important to put more pressure on it. He doesn't support spending tens of thousands of dollars in taxpayer money to provide additional access to a resource that already has access from the bridge, Odiorne Point, and the Seavey parcel.

Rob Berry, 21 Brackett Road, spoke about the lack of wildlife coming into the creek over the last few years, due to the increase in fishermen.

Steven Borne, 431 Wallis Road, noted that the when the acquisition process was developed with the Select Board, there was a lot of discussion about when the Commission does spend money, they should do whatever they can to make the parcel available for the residents to use. That has always been part of the process when Conservation buys a property.

Alex Bishop, 104 Locke Road, stated that he and his wife own two dogs and are always looking at areas to walk them. One of the areas is SELT (Southeast Land Trust Land). He pointed out that he is always picking up garbage at this property. Referring to Goss Farm, there are people that park there and walk. Who's to say that this parking lot will just be for fishermen? With summer the way it is, everyone is looking for a spot to park and not pay. It might be good intentions for fishermen, but there might be garbage and other items left behind by people.

Joe Marttila, 96 Alehson Street, noted that a number of his neighbors support the folks from Pioneer Road. He also noted that the headwaters of Berry's Brook comes from Coakley and it's not known what's in that water, as it has not been properly tested. It's a bad idea to encourage people to go there.

Delton Record, Grove Road, asked if Chief Walsh has weighed-in on any ramifications of illegal activities associated with this area.

Chair McFarland replied that the only comment Chief Walsh made to Conservation is if a sign was put up "no parking from dusk to dawn" at the access point, then his department can officially enforce that area and he is willing.

Tim Boorman, 200 Pioneer Road, commented that there hasn't been any police presence in that area for speeding or anything else that is going on there. He highly doubts that they will be patrolling that area after this is built.

Mr. Record stated if there's an ordinance that prohibits overnight parking and they're reacting to a condition that currently exists, it doesn't eliminate the condition. What's being reacted to is an ordinance that allows for enforcement. He asked the Commission if they hear the concerns and will make a decision based on the input from the public.

Alternate Mahoney noted that the Commission is a volunteer board. The Commission doesn't get to make any decisions without other bodies in town talking about it.

Member Oliver commented that having suggestions about how to make things better is a lot more helpful than being scolded about things that may have been done wrong, in someone's opinion.

Alternate Mahoney reiterated that the Commission hears the concerns. She thanked the public for sharing, as their opinions are important.

Bill Epperson, 324 West Road, speaking as a resident, stated that somehow this got to be an emotional issue as opposed to one of conservation. He was involved in the process back in 2022, as a selectman. He walked the land with members of the Conservation Commission and agrees that it's a beautiful piece of property. He thinks this volunteer board is capable of making decisions that are in line with their conservation mission, as well as being in line with the desires of the people in general. He doesn't think any of the Town's volunteers go out of their way to make decisions that are contrary to what people think should be done. Conservation land belongs to the people of the Town. He thinks they need to do exactly what they think is best for the land, in accordance to what people want. Mr. Epperson commented that taking emotions and accusations out would be helpful, as it just doesn't help anyone at all.

Joe Cummins, 990 Washington Road, spoke about the public hearing that was held for the property in 2022, in which only one person from the public attended. He encouraged the Commission to increase their efforts in getting people to the meetings.

Mr. Epperson commented that people not showing up to meetings is endemic. The planning board hears vile information that has to be communicated to the public and zero people show up, except for the board. The planning board spends a lot of time making regulations that affect everyone in town and no one shows up. The meetings are posted, advertised, and done legally. No one shows up, until something happens.

Member Garvan noted that the public hearing was properly noticed. As soon as the Commission found out there were concerns from the neighborhood and others, a listening session/site walk was held, which was fairly well attended, and this meeting has been fairly well attended.

Mr. Thiel expressed concerns about sight lines along the road for cars exiting and entering the property.

Liz Morris, 270 Pioneer Road, commented that there are a lot of cars at that property that are not New Hampshire cars. This isn't a problem, but this land is supposed to be for Rye taxpayers. She agrees that Pioneer Road is dangerous. There are going to be people going in and out of the parking lot that won't be aware of the number of bicyclists that ride along that road. She sees a serious safety problem.

Dean Chase, 410 Washington Road, stated that he benefits remarkably from the efforts of the Conservation Commission and their initiatives to preserve land, as his property is surrounded by conservation land and he uses it a lot. He also spends a lot of time at Berry's Brook; fishing, and

hiking. He uses the Seavey parking area. There's rarely a time when he doesn't have a "close call" pulling out of the parking area. He pointed out there is no good parking area on either Brackett Road or Pioneer Road up to Foye's Corner. Mr. Chase continued that just because the Town has conserved something doesn't mean that access has to be provided. He spoke about the challenges in regard to access on the property, as it's very dangerous terrain. He feels that access shouldn't be encouraged for people who have limited mobile capacity.

Mr. Chase pointed out that Rye is home to five state parks in its small land mass and coastline. Those parks afford unrestricted access to the general public. If this proposal made sense from a practical and safety standpoint, and it restricted access to only Rye residents, he might feel differently; however, it doesn't. He doesn't think the Town needs to be enhancing and improving access for non-residents. He commented that a lot of people probably have less concern and sensitivity to this proposal than they do with the concern that the Town is being overrun. The Town is being littered on and sped through. A lot of residents are fed up with that. To the extent that more access is going to be provided for non-residents to continue this trend is really at the forefront of a lot the people's consciousness. A big concern for a lot of people in town is that there are more out of towners who lack a respect and sensitivity for what Rye has to offer. That's what makes this issue particularly burdensome.

Rob Wright, 64 Alehson Street, stated that there are a lot of people opposed to the proposal. He doesn't think that the Commission should look at acquiring this for the purposes of access being a legitimizing reason to take additional risks to expose people to a potentially harmful watershed that would probably do it harm from it's over use. Not only is not necessary to provide access, it's not in the Conservation Commission's charter.

Jim Porter, 5 Park Ridge Ave., stated that his guess is that this area is being overserved with the small amount of parking that is available. If there was no parking in that area, fishermen would walk there. He urged the Conservation Commission to preserve that spot because it is very precious. He would not want any more access to it than what already exists. The area is heavily used and more access would not be providing the protection it deserves.

No further public comments were heard. The Commission thanked everyone for attending the meeting and voicing their thoughts and concerns.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

None

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mike Garvan to adjourn at 6:38 p.m. Seconded by Susan Shepcaro. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted, Dyana F Ledger