



Town of Bolton  
3045 Theodore Roosevelt Highway  
Bolton VT 05676  
Select Board Minutes  
December 14, 2015

Board members present: Josh Arneson, Gene Armstrong, Jen Dudley-Gaillard, Ron Lafreniere; Chair, Sharon Murray

Board members absent: none

Also present: Bonnie Rowell Mullen, Judith Bergeron, Rob Mullen, Zack Rabideau, Ann Macklin, Ali Kosiba, Luke Ingram, Steve Peery, Susanne Santor, Catherine Gott, Amy Ludwin, Pat Koolen, John Abersch, Brenna Angelillo, Ed and Sue Sinnamon, Lars Botzjorns, Jerry A. Mullen, Pat Mallow, Randall Barrows, Bryan Schultz, Matthew Mead, Pam Champney, Brian Miller, Kyle Miller, David J. Parot, Tony Wheelock, Duncan Galbraith, Jason Michaud, Mike Gervia, William Peery, Richard Streeter (sign in sheets are on file with these minutes in the Town Office)

Clerk: Amy Grover

1. **The meeting was called to order at 5:50 p.m. by Ron with a quorum of 5 members present.**
2. **Additions or deletions to the agenda: none**
3. **Public comment: none**
4. **Appointments: none**
5. **Business and Action Items**

**Old Business:**

**1. Trapping on Town Land Request:**

- Ron reviewed the request from a resident to trap on town land, and noted:
  - The request was from ONE TRAPPER for ONE SEASON ONLY.
  - The dates of Vermont trapping seasons, and that the law states to trap, a person must have written permission from the landowner.
  - The individual followed proper procedures and asked for permission to trap on town land.
  - Target species: fisher and beaver.
  - In Vermont fisher, beaver, and otter are not threatened nor on an endangered list.
  - The town is not trying to solve a problem, but to respond to a request.
- Sharon added that the land in question was purchased by town with funding assistance from the Land Trust and VT Housing and Conservation Board, and operates under a management plan with a conservation easement.
- Lars Botzjorns, Conservation Commission Chair stated that:
  - The Preston Pond management philosophy is to accommodate as many uses as possible that are sustainable on the land base.
  - The question is if trapping activity can take place with the current population and still satisfy the wildlife viewing needs of the public, and that the Conservation Commission does not have the answer to how much trapping pressure the land could take.

Amy noted that due to the high number of attendees that wanted to speak, the minutes would reflect a synopsis of the pro and con of statements regarding trapping.

Noted:

- All applauded the applicant for following proper procedures.
- Randy Barrows submitted two documents for the record, hard copies of which are on file with these minutes in the Town Office: Beaver Solutions Client Survey, and Best Management Practices for Trapping Beaver.
- Rob Mullen submitted two documents for the record, hard copies of which are on file with these minutes in the Town Office: Trapping in Preston Pond, and a petition against trapping with 42 signatures.
- Two beaver baffles have been installed in the area.

#### Con Statements:

- What wildlife management problem are we trying to solve. Overpopulation?
- What scientific biological information has been obtained to justify trapping.
- There has been no trapping in that area since 1909, there was no beaver there at that time.
- The town is charged with balancing ecological and public values, trapping is a negative impact to public values.
- If the entire colony of beavers is trapped, without them there could be an issue with the dam letting loose and flooding.
- The beavers are still recovering from a period in 2013 when there was a 15' gap in the dam, and a resident dropped trees to help repair the dam.
- That trapping is allowed does not mean the town has to give permission.
- Trapping is the least effective and least sustainable tool for wildlife management; it is indiscriminate and targets other species, healthy or sick.
- Traps capture non target animals by a 1/2 ratio.
- Traps run the risk of trapping domestic animals – liability issues for the town.
- Traps drown beavers, which takes up to 20 minutes, cruel and inhumane treatment.
- Conibear traps result in slow painful deaths.
- Many people consider this to be a very special piece of land, the connection matters here, where it doesn't in other places.
- There are plenty of other trapping opportunities on state land.
- If there are an abundance of beavers everywhere, why is there so much pressure to trap these two ponds.
- It takes 2 years to rehab a beaver or for a beaver kit to grow up; with no parents, the kits are doomed to a slow death by starvation, with no parents, all die and condemn the colony.
- If the beavers are gone, the dam will be gone.

#### Pro statements:

- Brief discussion of other ponds in the area and fact beavers have been creating more ponds, taking over land that used to be open and pushing out deer, moose, and bear.
- Why are people only worried about the beaver and not the rest of the wildlife that is being pushed out.
- Trappers have not had issues with non-target animals, or with animals stuck in traps and not dying.
- Trappers are respectful and responsible like everyone at the meeting and follow laws and best practice.
- Trappers want to keep populations sustainable for years to come and have no intention of trapping beavers out of existence at Preston Pond.
- No evidence that Conibear traps are anything but quick and efficient.
- A lot of science and biology goes into trapping to understand the limits and population, and that trappers had never experienced this type of issue before (anti-trapping sentiments).
- Traps are checked in accordance with the law, and usually much more often (i.e. every 24 hours vs. three days).

#### Also noted:

- Lack of respect for the area by dog owners allowing dogs to run and not cleaning up after them.

#### Lars Botzjorns and Amy Ludwin, Conservation Commission noted that the Conservation Commission:

- Is discussing successional habitat – diversity of age of the forests, which beavers naturally create.
- Has not had a chance to discuss the trapping issue, and although trapping is not specifically mentioned in the current Preston Pond Management Plan, it is not disallowed.
- The new/draft Management Plan is being developed– it is understood that there are competing public values, and they anticipate opening that issue up to public discussion.
- Will continue to discuss certain components, and that anywhere in that process public debate would be useful for understanding the broader context of values on use of the land.
- Will make recommendations to the Select Board.

Ron noted that there was an application before the Select Board that needed to be addressed, and that the board did not have the luxury of waiting for a public process with the Conservation Commission to be completed. Gene made the motion “to approve the application for trapping on town land at Preston Pond.” Ron seconded. There was no further discussion. Three were in favor, one against, one abstained and the motion passed (3-1-1).

Sharon stated that in terms of Bolton’s Town Plan, as a rural community, Bolton’s traditional values of hunting, trapping, and fishing have long been recognized, that this issue deserves a larger discussion, and that although the Select Board recognizes there are different values, they cannot decide tonight what those public values are.

2. FY 16-17 Budget:

- The General Government budget was reviewed line item by line item; town office, taxes and fees, contracted services, and allocations to service organizations.

**New Business:**

1. Warrants: Signed.

2. Minutes December 7, 2015: Gene made the motion “to approve the minutes of December 7, 2015.” Jen seconded. There was no further discussion. All were in favor and the motion passed (5-0).

**6. Communications:** none

**7. Other Business:** Noted the Merchant’s Bank Cemetery CD is due for renewal on 12/18/15. Consensus to renew for one year at the current rate of interest.

**8. Closing:** No other business was brought before this Board at this time. Gene made the motion “to close the meeting.” Josh seconded. There was no further discussion. All were in favor and the motion passed (5-0), at 9:15 p.m.

Attest: Amy Grover, Clerk

*Minutes are unofficial until approved. These minutes were read and approved by the Bolton Select Board on:*

\_\_\_\_\_, 2015

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ron Lafreniere, Chair, For the Board