

FINAL

**LEBANON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
City Council Chambers
Remote Via Microsoft Teams
LebanonNH.gov/Live
Thursday, July 8, 2021
6:30 PM**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ernst Oidtmann (Chair), Sarah Riley (Vice Chair), Erling Heistad, Donald Lacey, Susan Almy, Chris Johnson, Bruce James, Barbara Hirai (Alt.), Darla Bruno (Alt.)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Suellen Balestra (Alt.)

STAFF PRESENT: Mark Goodwin (GIS Coordinator)

1. CALL TO ORDER – Chair Oidtmann called the meeting to order at 6:42 PM

- The rules per 91-A under Covid were suspended by Executive Order. The Commission is meeting in person, except under extenuating circumstances. By a special commission, the State will study and determine if virtual meetings will continue in the future. City policy does not require members of the Public to appear in person.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

May 13, 2021 Minutes

Mr. Heistad MOVED to approve the May 13, 2021 Minutes presented in the July 8th, 2021 agenda packet with amendments.

Seconded by Ms. Almy.

Amendments: Page 3, Line 5; Correct ‘effect’ to ‘affect.’ Page 3 Line 7; Remove ‘in consideration of wildlife was found,’ and Add ‘were found in the NH Natural Heritage database, but a Conservation Commission member had noted the presence of a rare species. Ms. Brody stated she would very much like to hear more on that. Ms. Owens pointed out that there was a property owner aspect to this and that a representative of the property owner was on the call. At that point, Dan Justynski of Dartmouth introduced himself and indicated he would want to continue the conversation about the rare species off-line. He indicated to Ms. Riley that he would be available to talk early the following week about what she found. Ms. Brody requested that she be kept in the loop too. The last category of impacts are the wetland impacts, which Ms. Brody categorized for all intents and purposes as unavoidable. Page 3, Line 8; Remove ‘but wetland impacts were unavoidable.’ Page 4, Line 18; Remove ‘Conservation’ and Add ‘Commission.’ Page 4, Line 26; Remove ‘who might be the members’ and Add ‘which other boards might want representation’. Page 5, Line 12; Remove ‘Select Board member’ and Add ‘City Council alternate representative’. Page 5, Line 18; Add (having gone from semi-retired to semi-semi-retired). Page 5, Line 33; correct spelling of trailhead and Starr Hill. Page 5, Line 34; Add ‘No Dumping’. Page 5, Line 35; Add ‘by DPW.’ Page 5, Line 38; Add ‘Mr. Lacey’. Page 5, Line 39; Add ‘program had been’. Page 5, Line 40; Remove ‘reported’ and Add ‘had been using the online form to report’.

*** The Vote on the MOTION was unanimously approved (7-0).**

June 6, 2021 Minutes

Mr. Lacey MOVED to approve the June 6th, 2021 Minutes as amended and presented in the July 8th, 2021 agenda packet.

Seconded by Ms. Almy.

Amendments: Page 1, Line 28; Remove 'come from' and Add 'were addressed to.' Page 2, Line 4; Add 'but suggested something more similar to the Greg Lewis rules of engagement that had been displayed in the old council chambers.' Page 2, Line 10; Add 'clubs of Lebanon and Hanover'. Page 2, Line 15; Add 'temporarily'. Page 2, Line 18; Add 'at Boston Lot'.

*** The Vote on the MOTION was unanimously approved (7-0).**

3. PERMIT REVIEW: None

4. STUDY ITEMS:

A. Baker's Crossing Property Overview Discussion

Mr. Lacey sent several documents to the members, pertaining to his research on Baker's Crossing. He provided a presentation highlighting some of the significant content. Baker's Crossing is next to the Packard Hill Covered Bridge. The hill above the bridge, heading into town is Packard Hill and it was the site of the old Winona Farm. It was the Packard homestead. He provided an informative, historical background of the farm area down by the current existing bridge. He was unable to discover the reason for the name Baker's Crossing. The first covered bridge was built in 1878 and when it deteriorated a timber bridge was built. The current bridge, a replica of the 1878 bridge, was built in 1991. That created interest in the bridge and the pasture area as a point of interest.

Mr. Lacey has been doing a remarkable amount of work to reestablish the trail that is there. He has not found any evidence of protection for the land. The members discussed the Lost Fund regarding the purchase of the property. Eventually the entire \$30,000 purchase price was paid with the LOST Fund. They said that extra protection would be warranted on this property. The City Council is responsible for enabling this Fund; therefore, the protection of the land is vulnerable to the current perspective of the current City Council.

Previously there was a number of ideas and projects that were initiated or contemplated for the area. Mr. Lacey expressed interest in many ideas that previous commissions considered viable and suitable projects related to the property. The Commission could consider some of these historical ideas for the future. One of the previous owners that Mr. Lacey spoke with expressed interest, saying that she would like to see the field mowed on a regular basis and still allow the protection of the birds and wildlife yet protecting from shrubby growth. Mr. Lacey asked Mr. Rick Van de Poll's opinion regarding what to do with the field. It provides ecological diversity for animals and birds. The Commission will consider the options for the ecological diversity and a management plan of the field.

The Commission has several points to consider regarding Baker's Crossing. 1) How to manage the field. 2) Establishing a Conservation easement. 3) Reclaiming the upper hill pasture. It is a prime agricultural asset that should not be destroyed. 4) Setting up recreational activities with other organizations. Other

organizations have left behind wires and the area is used for snow mobile trails. NH Fish and Game stocks the river in that area. 5) The Commission could consider acquiring the parcel of land across the Mascoma River, which is wetland. That would make it conserved land on both sides of the river.

Currently the Rotary Club cares for the area. People park there to access the river, fishermen use the area, the picnic tables are used, and people access the water. Not many people use the rest of the field or walk in that area. The trail will give people more access to that field, but the reopened river trail may endanger the biodiversity of the riverbank.

Mr. Heistad pointed out that this morning there were three areas where sewage was spouting up on the land and running on the mound. DPW was asked to do some digging to keep it from reaching the river.

Protection seems to be the most important step for the Commission at this time. An agrarian use could be of interest, such as community gardens. The property is currently owned by the City and recognized for Conservation, but it is not fully protected. It is also good agriculture land which could be available in time of need.

The Commission members discussed their support to protect the area. No one spoke against protecting the property. The members discussed the Upper Valley Land Trust and if it would be interested in protecting Baker's Crossing, how much would it cost to protect the property, and how does it stack up in priorities. There is roughly \$700,000 in the LOST Fund. There is shoreline protection in place along the river. There are two small brooks that come close to there and it is primarily wetlands. Baker's Crossing is one area that could be useful for offsite mitigation during a flood event. Mr. Goodwin will get an estimate of what it costs to protect the property. The Commission will also keep sight of the potential for a mitigation project that is ready to go.

Mr. Goodwin discussed the field maintenance and management plan. A mowed field, while pleasing to the eye, is not the best management approach. His personal opinion is that it does not make habitat conservation sense and financially it is costly to mow even once, much less annually or on a regular basis. When it is hayed, it depletes the land. The cost to mow the field comes out of the Commission budget. They need to decide what portion should be brush hogged and how often.

Barbara Hirai suggested adding a sign that explains how the field is being managed and maintained. Sarah Riley said since the Conservation Commission currently have the conservation properties, they need to prioritize what the area will be used for and then determine how the fields and meadows should be managed. It may take funds to make this happen to ensure it is done correctly, purposefully and at the correct time. They might consider prescribed burning.

The next step for protection is to contact the Upper Valley Land Trust and determine what the cost would be and if the commission wants to spend the money to protect the land. Some members thought it was most important to determine what they currently want to do with the land, before determining if they will protect the land. It is a riparian environment that needs to be protected, as well as the meadow area. They do not have to be protected in the same way.

To protect the river bank, it is important to maintain a trail and establish it back from the shore. It is important to maintain a trail and establish it back from the shore. There could be a viewing area that people could use, but that would still protect the bank and shoreline.

Volunteers could be engaged to continue the arduous work that Mr. Lacey has been doing on the property. This would help establish a trail that could protect the access to the river. There are four points of access that have been established for many years. Mr. Lacey does not think that should be changed

and he thinks it is important to work on the invasives and protect the important plants. A loop trail through the meadow could protect the waterline. The loop through the meadow could be moved next year. It sounds as though the Commission agrees that a trail should be maintained and potentially expanded. Perhaps a Cooperative Extension person could help them make some decisions. Signage along the trail and trail markers may be helpful to people using the trails.

The Commission will consider reviewing other properties that have a management plan and other property that might need a plan. They may decide to review one property a month. Chambers has a management plan and there is a fair amount of information. It has a meadow. The unofficial steward and team is the neighbors, with Ranie being the point person. Mr. Goodwin will try to pull together a brief presentation for the next meeting.

5. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

A. Conservation Lands Monitors: NONE

B. Lebanon Biodiversity Group: NONE

C. Workshops and Educational Opportunities:

There is a workshop on Thursday July 22, that was mentioned in the emails today from Crystal.

6. Other Business:

How can the Commission find out more about mitigation options? Barbara Hirai would like to make sure it stays in the discussion. An email was sent on June 16th regarding mitigation criteria. When an impact is happening to the wetlands, the applicant must come up with a project or write a check.

Mr. Lacey moved to extend the meeting by 10 minutes.

Seconded by Sarah Riley.

**** The Vote on the MOTION was unanimously approved (7-0).***

Sarah Riley will look for help to learn how to make an active list of mitigation projects. The formal process is to, 1st-minimize the impact, 2nd-look for a mitigation project and 3rd-write a check. Members are concerned that people prefer to write a check instead of finding a mitigation project.

The Commission asked about the annual update regarding the balance of the LOST Fund and the transactions that have occurred. Finance will be contacted again to ask for more transparency.

Mark Goodwin gave a great presentation about the Open Space Plan with the current Council.

7. Future Agenda Items: None

8. Open to the Public: None

9. ADJOURNMENT:

Erling Heistad MOVED to adjourn the meeting.

Seconded by Mr. Lacey

No vote was held as the meeting time had expired.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:14 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Billings
Recording Secretary