

FINAL

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Remote Via Microsoft Teams
[LebanonNH.gov/Live](https://lebanonnh.gov/Live)
October 14, 2021
6:30 PM**

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Chris Johnson, Suellen Balestra (Alt.)

STAFF PRESENT: Mark Goodwin (GIS Coordinator)

1. CALL TO ORDER – Chair Oidtmann called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM

- Chair Oidtmann appointed Barbara Hirai as a regular voting member in place of Susan Almy and Megan Smith for Chris Johnson.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: September 23, 2021 – Site Walk

Mr. Heistad MOVED to approve the September 23, 2021 Site Walk Minutes as presented in the October 14, 2021 agenda packet.

Seconded by Ms. Riley.

**** The Vote on the MOTION was approved (6-0-2) (E.Oidtmann & M. Smith abstaining).***

Susan Almy entered the meeting.

The Commission discussed the process for reviewing their minutes. Mr. Goodwin noted that the current review process places a burden on deadlines. He suggested substantive changes be discussed during the meeting, but that typos/punctuation edits be sent to the Recording Secretary for inclusion separately.

Vice Chair Riley stated that she conducted a pre-edit of the previous minutes, which contained both small and substantive changes.

Mr. Goodwin stated that the group could try this process again. He noted that he had some concerns with one Commissioner editing the minutes outside of a public meeting in a pre-edit. Chair Oidtmann stated that these changes are then reviewed by the whole group in a public meeting. This is being done to try to save time during meetings.

Ms. Almy stated that the newly created State Housing Appeals Board has said that it has made rulings specifically based on meeting minutes. Meeting minutes are important and can be very valuable.

It was agreed that a pre-edit of the meeting minutes will be completed by Vice Chair Riley.

3. PERMIT REVIEW

A. None

4. STUDY ITEMS

A. Goodwin Conservation Property – property overview discussion & bridge update

Mr. James made a presentation on the Goodwin Conservation property. He explained that the property was acquired by the City in 1974. It was deeded as 120 acres for recreational purposes. The property originally had four conservation restrictions on it: 1) no commercial buildings, 2) only for recreation, 3) no tree cutting except for hiking, skiing, or snowmobile trails, 4) no removal of gravel or minerals. One early project on the property was the exercise trail, completed in 1979. A number of groups in Lebanon both sponsored and supported the trail. There may be similar support now for this trail to be brought back to life, if that was something the Commission was interested in.

Vice Chair Riley noted that the property is currently 108 acres.

Mr. James stated that the property has 3 ecological zones with different human uses in each. There is a ‘no trails zone’ consisting of mixed hardwoods, a ‘trails zone’ on steep and gradual grades with mixed hardwood-hemlock forest, and the ‘Great Brook area’ with a riparian forest zone.

Mr. James stated that a new bridge is needed on the property, located a short distance from Meriden Road. Some questions to consider for the new bridge include safety, sustainability, aesthetics, and costs. He asked if the new bridge could be considered a central feature of “nature's gateway to Lebanon” from Meriden Road to Storrs Hill Ski Area and downtown Lebanon.

Mr. James gave a review of bridges across brooks on hiking trails in the Lebanon region. The first bridge discussed was in Hanover across Slade Brook. This bridge is 42’ long and, unfortunately, impassable for wheelchairs due to a large pole located in the center of the bridge at the beginning of the trail. The second bridge is 36’ long and is approximately 5 years old. This bridge looks sturdy and reassuring and has a ramp leading up to it. The third bridge discussed is 33’ long with a railing on only one side. All three bridges are different and have different purposes.

The Commission discussed the portion of the Goodwin Conservation property that is listed as a ‘trail free zone’ and if trails still remain or could be created there. Mr. Heistad stated that there are stone walls in this area running vertically and horizontally. The challenging area to put a trail on is the steep area by the Brook. The land levels off as you get further south. Mr. Heistad discussed the possibility of installing a cross country ski trail that could even connect to the Ticknor property if that was something the Commission wanted.

Vice Chair Riley also gave a presentation on the Goodwin Conservation property. She explained that it was the first piece of conservation land in the City. An easement was given by the City to

the Society for Protection of New Hampshire Forests in 2003. This property is approximately 108 acres. The purpose of the easement was to preserve the land for outdoor recreation and public education, preservation and conservation of open space, conservation of forest and wildlife habitat including New Hampshire native flora and fauna and wintering deer yards, protection of approximately 2,380' of undeveloped water frontage along Great Brook, scenic enjoyment for the public, and preservation of water quality of surface waters that flow into Great Brook. She explained that the limitations included in the deed and easement are that the property remain only as open space, no commercial activity, recreation only, no dumping of man-made items, no postings to prohibit low-impact, non-motorized, non-wheeled, non-commercial outdoor recreational purposes, no timber harvesting, no minerals extracted, no removal, filling, or disturbance of soil surface or changes in topography, water systems, wetlands or natural habitat (unless required for conservation, habitat management, or non-commercial recreational uses of the property and that does not harm threaten or endangered species), trails are okay for hiking, skiing, and snowmobiling as long as they are not wider than 10'.

Vice Chair Riley stated that a survey completed in 2000 showed stone walls making up the westerly, southern, and easterly bounds south of the Brook, with short breaks in them. The survey map shows a right of way to a telephone company through the property. It is unclear if this right of way still exists and/or if the telephone company even still exists. There is also a right of way through Lot 107-10 from School Street to Great Brook. A project completed by Dartmouth students (led by then Vice-Chair Earl Jette) in 1975 presented a plan for Goodwin to be an actively managed conservation area, including putting a roof over the bridge, and paving the access road from School Street. They included parcel 107-10 on the School Street side of the Brook, and part of that property was noted as being one of the nicest spots for a picnic area. This area has never been included as part of the Conservation area, to her knowledge. The report also stated how polluted the Brook was, due to flowage from nearby houses.

Vice Chair Riley noted that, although the property is approximately 108 acres, if combined with other nearby easements, it is part of almost 500+ acres of continuous open space. She would like for the Commission to think of the property as part of a larger landscape. She explained that the wildlife mentioned in the easement baseline report include white-tailed deer, porcupine, black bear, eastern coyote, red fox, grey fox, mink, barred owl, broad-winged hawk, brook trout, and turkey. There were also various waterfowl and amphibians, and dense stands of hemlock which would be good winter cover for deer. Vice Chair Riley stated that Great Brook features fast-flowing, cool water species such as brook trout, and reported anecdotally on crayfish, small unidentified fish, and leeches she observed in the Brook. The property supports spring ephemerals and other native plant species, including at least two State-listed forbs.

Vice Chair Riley showed a picture of an area on the property where hemlocks have been cleared between two trails. There is also a fire ring, bench, and hole in the ground. She questioned what this area may be used for. She stated that there are also signage issues, in terms of having consistent styles and blazing types, on the property. There are invasive plants located on the property, most of which are included in the easement baseline report. There is some debris located on the property, including remnants of the old bridge along the Brook. There are also trail erosion and drainage problems that need to be addressed. She questioned where vernal pools may be located on the property. She expressed concern that there appear to be cuts that have

been made on the property and would like to remind the public that neither trails nor trees should be cut without first talking to the Commission.

Chair Oidtmann noted that there was a member of the public in the meeting room and asked if he would like to address the Commission.

Nick Mouzourakis, 26 Bassy Street, explained that he has been speaking to Mr. Goodwin and the Deputy City Manager regarding a tree on the Zeev Darer Memorial Natural area that abuts his property. He would like a better view of the adjacent natural area and has suggested putting a platform on the tree. In his discussions there was also conversation about possibly purchasing a small piece of the natural area that contains the tree to add to his lot. He noted that there are no easements on the land, but that it must be kept as open space for perpetuity. He also believes that there may be the potential to create a rope walk for the public to enjoy the wetlands in the natural area. He would consider creating a tree platform viewing station approximately 40' up the tree but would like to have control over it for a liability's sake.

Chair Oidtmann stated that he would like to see this in a written proposal to the Commission and as a future agenda item.

Mr. Mouzourakis suggested that he would help to create two platforms with a ropewalk in between them, if possible.

Mr. Goodwin stated that the adjacent property, Zeev Darer, was donated to the City for conservation. There was no easement on it at that time so the only intentions for the land were listed within the deed. This included mention of a footbridge with elevated planks through the wetland for a public viewing area.

Mr. Mouzourakis stated that his proposal is to find compromise for both parties. He suggested that the public could use a viewing platform that he would create, possibly by appointment only. It would not be open to the public directly, unless located on city land with city permission. He would lock up access to the platform on off-hours if it was located on his property.

The Commission stated that it would like to see a formal presentation of this idea at a future meeting. The Commission then continued its discussion of the Goodwin Conservation property.

Vice Chair Riley asked the Commission to consider what to do with the fire ring area, having some invasive pulling days, and changes to usage restrictions on the property. Also discussed was whether it makes sense to consider adding new trails before existing trails are in good shape. Ms. Bruno stated that she believes the rule for all properties should be that existing trails are kept in good shape before a new ones are made. The Commission discussed discontinuing the Hill Trail, scattering the existing fire ring and removing or reusing the remaining wood, and using signs to explain when areas are closed for habitat restoration or that fires are not permitted.

Clayton Morlock, City Conservation Ranger, presented his proposal for a new bridge on the Goodwin Conservation property. He explained that the proposed new bridge is 4' higher than the old one. He believes this bridge can be built without heavy equipment and will use far less

material by including trusses. The footings will be treated 8x8's. The proposed bridge will be able to hold approximately 6 people and could possibly be wheelchair accessible. The proposed bridge will last at least 10 years, can be built by volunteers, and will have little to no maintenance associated with it.

Mr. James stated that he has concern that this proposed bridge will only last for approximately 10 years. Mr. Morlock stated that the bridge is proposed to last for at least 10 years.

Ms. Almy asked about erosion in this area. Mr. Morlock stated that water will need to be diverted away from the old snowmobile trail. There will also need to be a water bar or something similar installed at the nearby original trail, but this will be needed regardless of the proposed bridge design.

Mr. James asked about lateral sway of the bridge. Mr. Morlock stated that his design will address this issue. The 56' span proposed could need additional supports depending on the design.

Vice Chair Riley asked that local volunteers be involved in the potential project. She reiterated the importance of taking care of the drainage issues, as she does not want runoff from the old road to wash out footings on the south side of the bridge. She stated that invasive management will be needed, especially on the north side of this area and wants to make sure the project does not further spread them.

Mr. Heistad asked where people will continue onto when they cross the proposed bridge. Mr. Morlock stated that there are trails located on both sides of the bridge. Mr. Heistad suggested there could be more accessible trails leading to the upper level of the property. Mr. Morlock stated that he would make the approaches to the bridge flush if the Commission was expecting wheelchair access.

Mr. James asked what this proposed bridge will represent for Lebanon's future. He stated that the approach presented seems minimal. He would prefer for this bridge to allow for wider access into the future. He would like for the bridge to be bigger and more substantial. He noted that he would like to see the Commission take a stand for having a bigger picture than simply having a bridge that can be completed before Christmas. He asked who gave Mr. Morlock the go ahead to move forward with this project, as it does not appear the Commission is ready to do so.

Mr. Goodwin stated that the Commission gave him marching orders nine years ago to replace this bridge. Funding more expensive bridge proposals has been an issue. Then he was approached by Mr. Morlock to advance the project more cost-effectively. Mr. Goodwin agreed that he does not want to see a bridge built that will eventually have maintenance issues, but the Commission has been against spending a lot of money on this bridge project in the past.

Vice Chair Riley stated that a bridge in this location would provide access to the conservation area for the public. She is in favor of moving forward with this proposal and the possibility to include volunteer participation from the community.

Ms. Almy noted that there is only parking for three cars on 120 South.

Mr. Heistad stated that promoting use of the conservation lands in Lebanon is a good thing and this bridge would help people access Goodwin Conservation property.

Ms. Hirai stated that she is in favor of this bridge. She also believes the Commission needs to continue to look at maintaining the trails on the south side of it, especially if there will be increased usage.

Ms. Smith agreed that the bridge will allow for increased access and will allow for volunteer efforts in the community.

Ms. Bruno agreed with the proposal for the simple bridge.

Mr. Morlock stated that Simbex, a local engineering firm, is willing to help build the bridge, and that other community volunteers are also welcome.

The Commission agreed to continue to pursue the proposed bridge.

***Ms. Almy MOVED to extend the meeting for 15 minutes.
Seconded by Ms. Riley.***

**** The Vote on the MOTION was unanimously approved (8-0).***

***Ms. Almy MOVED to approve the bridge proposal before the Commission for Goodwin Conservation property at an estimated cost of \$2,200.
Seconded by Mr. Heistad.***

**** The Vote on the MOTION was approved (7-1), (B. James – against).***

Mr. James noted that Vice Chair Riley's and Mr. Morlock's presentations were not provided to the Commission or listed on the website ahead of time. He asked about this procedure moving forward. Mr. Goodwin agreed that any materials to be presented should be distributed ahead of time. The Commission is not out of order though if someone brings in materials to present at the time of the meeting. Vice Chair Riley stated that she stepped up to make the presentation at the end of the last meeting. It was discussed how presentation materials make it into the agenda packet.

The Commission discussed the possible inclusion of time limits for agenda items.

5. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. None

6. OTHER BUSINESS – none.

7. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The Commission agreed to discuss the Zeev Darer property as a future agenda item, with Mr. Goodwin serving as the lead presenter. The Commission also would like to continue the conversation regarding additional items for the Goodwin Conservation property.

Ms. Hirai noted that she has not heard back regarding the geocache on the Cole property but that she has blocked off the unauthorized trail. She also stated that the wastewater treatment facility boat launch has spray paint down to show where some kinds of barriers will be placed. She explained that a project idea is needed for the Taking Action for Wildlife project. There is also an upcoming annual meeting for NHACC and she encouraged members to attend.

8. OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

This occurred earlier in the meeting.

9. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude
Recording Secretary