

FINAL

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

Remote Via Microsoft Teams

LebanonNH.gov/Live

May 12, 2022

6:30 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sarah Riley (Chair), Erling Heistad, Ernst Oidtman, Barbara Hirai (Alt.), Chris Johnson

MEMBERS ABSENT: Bruce James (Vice Chair), Donald Lacey, Megan Smith (Alt.), Darla Bruno (Alt.), Susan Almy

STAFF PRESENT: Mark Goodwin (GIS Coordinator)

1. CALL TO ORDER – Chair Riley called the meeting to order at 6:29 PM

Chair Riley promoted Ms. Hirai to sit for Mr. James.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: April 14, 2022

Mr. Oidtman MOVED to approve the April 14, 2022 minutes, as amended.

Seconded by Mr. Heistad.

Page 6, Line 1: Change “Mr. Vincent,” to “Mr. Criswell”

Page 8, Line 26: Delete the second sentence regarding the Tree Walk

** The Vote on the MOTION was approved (5-0-0).*

3. PERMIT REVIEW

A. None

4. STUDY ITEMS

A. Master Plan Update – Actions & Strategies Status

Chair Riley noted that the Master Plan is not a Conservation Commission document. The Commission is being asked to review the Natural Resource chapter. Not everything listed in the strategies and actions in the chapter relate to Commission responsibilities.

Mr. Goodwin noted that the Commission could determine that certain items should be more appropriately designated to different groups in the City.

Chair Riley stated that some items in the actions and strategies might also fit better in a different part of the document, such as the Energy chapter.

The Commission reviewed the document. It was noted that actions which have been completed should not be lost, in order to best capture accomplishments.

Mr. Goodwin suggested that the Commission first review the items marked as “actions that the ConCom is potentially interested in engaging with,” as these are items that staff is looking for feedback on.

The group discussed Chapter 5, Outcome 1, Strategy 6 (5.1.6) “Encourage the creation of a private conservation council to act with no personal benefit to acquire easements or purchase property in situations where the City may not be able to respond quickly to a priority parcel because of legal or other constraints.”

Chair Riley stated that she believes it would benefit the City to have a private organization working on conservation matters. Mr. Oidtmann stated that the ConCom is already doing this and doesn’t understand why another group would also be necessary. Ms. Hirai stated that private organizations can access money for projects differently than the ConCom can. Mr. Goodwin noted that UVLT and the Society for the Protection of NH Forests already work in this capacity. He questioned if a fourth entity is necessary. Chair Riley noted that those entities do not work specifically for Lebanon, and it would be good to have this. A private group could be working to acquire land or engage in conservation efforts in Lebanon itself and this would be an important tool. Mr. Heistad asked if there is the energy to run such a tool. Chair Riley stated that this is a separate issue.

Using a straw poll, the Commission was in favor of continuing to leave item 5.1.6 in the Master Plan Natural Resources Chapter, with a vote of 4-1.

The group discussed Chapter 5, Outcome 1, Strategy 7 (5.1.7) “Develop a land acquisition/conservation easement program to protect scenic views.”

Mr. Johnson asked why a program specifically for scenic views would be more prevalent than for other issues. Mr. Oidtmann agreed and asked how “scenic view” is defined. Mr. Heistad stated that there are more important items at hand on the ground versus the view aspect. Chair Riley asked if this should be in a different chapter of the Master Plan.

Mr. Goodwin explained that the Commission already has a regulatory tool for scenic view overlay districts. This item seems redundant.

In response to a question from Mr. Oidtmann, Chair Riley stated that currently ridgelines are not specifically protected, by definition.

The Commission agreed to strike this item.

The group discussed Chapter 5, Outcome 1, Strategy 8 (5.1.8) “Include City gateways in open space planning.”

The group discussed the definition of a “city gateway.” Mr. Johnson asked how City gateways tie into natural resources. Mr. Goodwin suggested that this item be moved to a planning or other group’s interest. Mr. Oidtmann stated that the Commission may still like to be informed on this item.

The group discussed Chapter 5, Outcome 1, Strategy 9 (5.1.9) “Support efforts to establish more scenic roads.”

The group discussed if this item belongs in the Natural Resource chapter. Mr. Goodwin explained that scenic roads are a regulatory defined entity and there is a process for adoption of one through the City Council. Once adopted, there are rules regarding tree removal along the road and pavement width standards. There could be more candidates for scenic roads and the ConCom may want to be in the loop for that. Chair Riley stated that this is already in place. There is some natural resource value to these roads. The ConCom is supposed to be notified of proposed cuttings along the road but was not during the last round. Mr. Goodwin stated that landowners do not have to notify the City of cuttings; this is a requirement for utilities.

The group agreed to keep this item on the list for now until the work plan is reviewed next year. Chair Riley noted that this may not be an item for ConCom only.

The group discussed Chapter 5, Outcome 1, Action 7 (5.1.7) “Create incentives in the Zoning Ordinance for agricultural businesses and expand the importance of maintaining and increasing agricultural activity within the City.”

Mr. Johnson stated that he does not see the ConCom taking an active role in this item, though it should likely be somewhere in the Master Plan. The group agreed.

The group discussed Chapter 5, Outcome 1, Action 14 (5.1.14) “Adopt a ridgeline ordinance to protect ridgelines from poorly sited development and consider including hillsides and wildlife corridors to lowlands.”

Mr. Goodwin suggested that it might be the ConCom’s role to push the Planning Office to make something like this happen, in terms of natural resources. The group agreed to leave this item on the list.

The group discussed Chapter 5, Outcome 1, Action 16 (5.1.16) “Develop and approve a wind turbine ordinance to enforce the appropriate siting and design of wind turbines.”

Ms. Hirai noted that this item is also in the Energy chapter. Chair Riley stated that siting of wind turbines could have great impact on natural resources and wildlife. Mr. Goodwin stated that Lebanon does not have the characteristics for commercial wind farms. It is unclear if this is large concern for the City. Chair Riley stated that, while this might not need to be included in the Natural Resource chapter, the ConCom would like to be kept updated and have input on siting of these items.

The group discussed Chapter 5, Outcome 1, Action 17 (5.1.17) “Develop and approve a telecommunications ordinance to enforce the appropriate siting and design of telecommunications towers.”

Chair Riley suggested that the existing ordinances could possibly be reviewed to see if any changes can be made. The group agreed to leave this item on the list for potential review in the future.

The group discussed Chapter 5, Outcome 2, Strategy 6 (5.2.6) “Seek outside funding or volunteers to clean up sites in coordination with the regional planning commission.”

It was noted that this task was recently taken on by the ConCom. Mr. Goodwin suggested striking the regional planning commission from this item. The group agreed.

The group discussed Chapter 5, Outcome 2, Strategy 7 (5.2.7) “Continue alliances with neighboring communities and regional organizations, such as the Mascoma Watershed Conservation Council, to foster cooperation in protecting water bodies and watersheds.”

The group agreed that this item is essential and considered striking the name of a specific group to be listed.

The group discussed Chapter 5, Outcome 2, Actions 4, 5, & 6:

“Create source water overlay for existing drinking water sources based on the Model Rule for the Protection of Water Supply Watersheds and the 1999 Mascoma Watershed Study.”

“Develop and adopt an aquifer protection overlay district to more strictly regulate development adjacent to potential drinking water sources.”

“Conduct a land use and environmental constraint studies of the Mascoma River, Stoney Brook, Hardy Hill Brook, and Blodget Brook corridors to guide appropriate development in order to protect drinking water supplies.”

The group agreed to keep all of these items on the list.

The group discussed Chapter 5, Outcome 2, Strategies 18, 20, 25, & 26

“Investigate and recommend appropriate measures to ensure handicapped accessibility on conservation lands where feasible.”

“Continue to celebrate Arbor Day to raise awareness of the importance of trees to all residents.”

“Continue formal cooperative planning among adjacent communities through the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission and other organizations like the Mascoma Watershed Conservation Council.”

“Take the lead on developing a Mascoma Watershed Plan to protect our drinking water source.”

The ConCom discussed regrouping some of the items with ones previously discussed. The group agreed to keep all of these items on the list. The group discussed wordsmithing these items in the future.

The group discussed Chapter 5, Outcome 2, Actions 12, 17, 20 (5.2.12, 17, 20)

“Explore the expansion of the Steep Slope Overlay District.”

Mr. Goodwin stated that there are some items outlined in the RL3, but these could be expanded through this item. The Board agreed to keep this item on the list.

“Identify parks and recreational facilities through publicity and signage that includes a brief history of who donated the land, interesting facts about the property, and existing trails and/or flora in the area.”

The Commission agreed to changing the wording to “conservation areas” instead of “parks and recreation facilities,” and leaving this on the list.

“Develop a wildlife habitat overlay zone for critical habitat areas, including deer yards, bear habitat, vernal pools and wildlife corridors.”

Chair Riley noted that the City does not already have this overlay district and it could be important.

“Inventory areas that have been impacted by invasive species and develop a plan to address these areas.”

The group agreed that this is an ongoing item for the ConCom and to leave it on the list.

“Hold annual tours of City parks and conservation lands for City Council members and all other City boards.”

Mr. Johnson asked when the last time something similar was done. Mr. Goodwin stated that he does not believe it has been. Mr. Johnson stated that he sees value in a tour with the City Council to address issues during it. The group agreed to keep this item on the list.

The ConCom agreed to continue to work on this list and wordsmith or move items as it sees fit. Ms. Hirai stated that the city of Dover recently implemented a Climate Action chapter of the Master Plan. There are clear actions in the document. Some may be relevant for Lebanon to include. Mr. Goodwin noted that there is currently a grant to pursue a Lebanon Climate Action Plan.

B. Farnum Hill Preserve – Property Overview & Discussion

Mr. Oidtmann stated that himself, Bruce James, and John Tietjen walked the southern part of Farnum Hill. The group walked up to the Ridge Trail and followed it south to the crossroad. The group saw 1-2 vernal pools along the Maries Way Trail. The Ridge Trail close to Poverty Lane was flooded and there is a rock wall on the east side of the trail which could be used to make steppingstones. There was no consensus in the group between using steppingstones or a wooden boardwalk. There is a lot of water that comes down Maries Way and a set of stairs there was previously removed. There is an open field, north of the kiosk, that belongs to the reserve that appears to be mowed.

Chair Riley stated that one of the recommendations in the management plan was to get rid of the red pine plantation as soon as possible, however Mr. Goodwin pointed out that no cutting is allowed per the conservation easement. The management plan also noted that it has less wildlife/ecological value. The Ron Bailey Loop trail is routed straight through a potential vernal pool (as per the NRI). It would be good to see if there are any vernal pool obligate

species in the area, in order to reroute the trail if necessary. The NRI lists 8 vernal pools on the property, but there may be others.

The group discussed renaming and adding a rogue trail to the trail map for the area. Mr. Oidtmann stated that this is a shortcut from Maries Way to the Ridge Trail. The group that walked the area agreed to discourage use of it and not mark it, as there is a nearby trail that goes to the same destination. The more trails created; the more wildlife can be impacted. Members of the ConCom agreed to go to the area to examine these trails.

C. Discussion RE: Goodwin Bridge RTP Proposal

Chair Riley stated that Bruce James shared a draft of the proposal with the group, looking for input. The group agreed to send comments/questions directly to Mr. James.

5. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Reports from other committees:

--Conservation Lands Monitors (Various Members)

Chair Riley stated that there will be two upcoming site visits with organizations involved in holding easements or funding lands. May 19, 2022 at 9am, the Society of Protection for NH Forests will check the East Wilder area regarding native vegetation and other potential easement violations. Also, because LCIP funds were used to purchase the property, annual monitoring will be done at Alana Cole on May 31, 2022, at 9am.

Chair Riley noted that the building where the Montessori school is located adjacent to Alana Cole is for sale, but there is no information about the land itself. This would be a great spot as a riverfront recreation/education center.

Mr. Johnson stated that last Saturday, with the help of Chair Riley and Ms. Hirai, a clean-up of the Two Rivers area was organized in conjunction with the Upper Valley Young Professionals. 24 blue bags were filled. The group may be interested in helping with ConCom projects in the future as well. It was a great way to educate this demographic about the local conservation areas.

Ms. Hirai stated that there was a Wild About Lebanon Walk at Starr Hill for Earth Day on April 22, 2022. There were approximately 20 members of the public, including 5 children, between the two vernal pool workshops held at Ticknor and Starr Hill. Chair Riley stated that some people in the vernal pool workshop wanted to do more, so they found all the vernal pools lists on the Boston Lot and reported back with a spreadsheet.

Ms. Hirai stated that Mr. Lacey has been doing a lot of work clearing out Baker's Crossing, and will lead to a Wild About Lebanon Tree Crawl on May 20, 2022 at 4pm. An additional Wild About Lebanon hike on Indian Ridge is scheduled for June 18, 2022, at 10am, with Mr. James.

Ms. Hirai stated that someone had recently cleared a trail that commissioners had tried to block on the Trues Brook Property.

--Lebanon Biodiversity Group (D. Lacey)

Chair Riley stated that May is garlic mustard season and there is a public campaign on the Rail Trail and Greenway encouraging the public to pull it up when seen. This message is also going out through Leb News. The Rec, Art, and Parks Department has been putting out the message on the City's website. In the interest of not putting as much biomass into the landfill, this year people are being asked to pull it and leave it on site. There is a page on the City's website for this and the SeeClickFix app can be used to post pictures of people doing this work around the City.

--Workshops & Educational Opportunities (Various Members)

This item was not discussed at this time.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

7. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS - *This item was not discussed at this time.*

A. Continued Review of Chapter 52 – Conservation Land Regulations

B. Continued Review of the Con Com's Rules & Procedure

8. OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

9. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude
Recording Secretary