

FINAL

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

Remote Via Microsoft Teams

[LebanonNH.gov/Live](https://lebanonnh.gov/live)

September 8, 2022

6:30 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sarah Riley (Chair), Ernst Oidtmann, Donald Lacey, Erling Heistad, Chris Johnson (remote), Susan Almy, Sean Dittrich (Alt.) (remote), Barbara Hirai (Alt.)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Bruce James

STAFF PRESENT: Mark Goodwin (GIS Coordinator)

1. CALL TO ORDER – Chair Riley called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM.

The Commission introduced itself to new alternate member, Sean Dittrich.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: August 11, 2022

Mr. Heistad MOVED to approve the August 11, 2022 minutes, as submitted.

Seconded by Mr. Oidtmann

** The Vote on the MOTION was approved by roll call Barbara Hirai – aye; Ernst Oidtmann – abstain; Sarah Riley – aye; Sue Almy – aye; Erling Heistad – aye; Don Lacey – aye; Chris Johnson – aye; (7-0-1).*

3. PERMIT REVIEW

A. None

4. STUDY ITEMS

A. Conservation Opportunity Discussion with UVLT

Peg Merrens, Vice President Conservation at Upper Valley Land Trust (UVLT), explained that Jeremy & Sally Rutter are interested in protecting their 22 acres property on Stevens Road permanently. She believes this could have great benefit to the Signal Hill Conservation Area. This land ranks as supporting habitat, and Signal Hill is ranked as some of the highest wildlife habitat in the State. The NH Wildlife Action Plan identifies this habitat as wetland and riverine wetland habitat. River otter are more common in this particular watershed and riverine valley, and there is evidence of them on this property. The Rutters would like to gift the land to the UVLT, and it could then be simultaneously transferred to the City, or this could be transferred to the City, or through an amendment to the Signal Hill Conservation Area. The UVLT asked the Commission to use some of its LOST funds to cover some of the cost of this process.

In response to a question from Mr. Lacey, Ms. Merrens explained that the best protection is to place a conservation easement on the land before it is transferred to the City, if that is the intended purpose of it.

Mr. Oidtmann stated that the Commission is extremely grateful to the Rutters for the thought and potential donation. He does not care the process, so long as the land is conserved in the end.

Mr. Goodwin suggested that this be included as an agenda item for a future meeting. There may also be need for City Council approval.

Ms. Merrens noted that the Signal Hill easement does not have a riparian buffer provision, but such a provision could be added to the easement, if the proposed property is added to the Signal Hill easement. UVLT has completed a number of these amendments in the past, allowing the new piece to be subject to all the provisions and protections of the same plan while still having its own goals.

In response to a question from Ms. Hirai regarding if there will be mowing or maintenance needed on this property, Ms. Merrens stated that the State identifies this as grassland habitat, so there could be good reason to keep the land open and not maintain it. However, the Commission can decide if some sort of mowing regime would be necessary into the future.

Chair Riley stated that she believes using the LOST Fund for some of the associated fees for this is appropriate.

Mr. Heistad stated that he would like to see the sheet flow running into the land taken care of.

The Commission unanimously agreed that it would support the protection of this property, regardless of the protection mechanism, and is willing to provide financial support to see the transaction occur.

B. City of Lebanon Draft Strategic Plan – continued discussion

Mr. Goodwin explained this is a similar effort to what the Commission used to do for the Master Plan, but the public has now been invited to participate in the process as well.

Chair Riley stated that she believes the Commission should come up with a couple of action items regarding water resources. She stated that she also feels it is important for the City to focus on updating maps of existing trails and making them available to the public.

Ms. Hirai noted that some of her items to include are to prioritize protection of floodplains and wetlands, to prioritize protection of stream and river shorelines, to promote the creation of a private conservation organization, and to create more outdoor/indoor meeting areas.

Mr. Heistad stated that he would like to see a map of aquifers in the City and effects of removing water from these on drilled wells.

The group spoke about including items regarding capitalizing on the nature economy, environmental justice, and the redevelopment of the natural area along the riverfront downtown.

Chair Riley noted that the City Manager did not ask for items to be prioritized at this time. This is a brainstorming session.

Ms. Hirai stated that she would like for the Commission to review its management plans and associated action items.

The Commission discussed including items such as regarding inventorying and monitoring vernal pools, pulling efforts, pursuing conservation opportunities for high valued habitats, urban forests, creating incentives in the zoning ordinance and looking to increase and maintain the amount of agricultural activity in the City, aquifer protection overlays, rain gardens and conducting land use and environmental constraint studies on rivers and brooks.

Mr. Goodwin suggested an item regarding the City removing metal fencing within wildlife corridors. Chair Riley stated that there are likely other items from the Wildlife Crossing report which should be added as well.

Chair Riley noted that Devin Wilkie mentioned including items regarding environmental justice, such as protecting natural resources for future generations, expand awareness of and access to natural resource areas, and establish programming that involves underrepresented communities in terms of preserving natural resources.

Chair Riley suggested including an item regarding updating maps of trails and Class VI roads. Also, implementing dark sky initiatives and reviewing lighting options.

C. LOST Fund Update

Mr. Goodwin stated that he has created a map displaying the LOST Fund properties. This depicts properties which are both 100% and partially enrolled. The Assessor will be sending out a letter to all of these properties to ask for updated information. The Commission reviewed the map.

5. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Reports from other committees:

--Conservation Lands Monitors (Various Members)

There was no update at this time.

--Lebanon Biodiversity Group (D. Lacey)

There was no update at this time.

--Workshops & Educational Opportunities (Various Members)

Chair Riley noted that there is a workday on Saturday from 10am-12pm at East Wilder Conservation Area. She is trying to gather the fall schedule for Wild About Lebanon.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

Chair Riley stated that she met with someone who would like to set up a memorial bench at the Goodwin property. It will need to be determined if the proposed location is reasonable for bench placement.

Mr. Oidtmann suggested that long-standing members who leave the Commission should have a thank you card sent to them to acknowledge their work. He also asked about setting up a workday for trail work.

7. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS –

None at this time.

8. OPEN TO THE PUBLIC –

None at this time.

9. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:16 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude
Recording Secretary