

FINAL

**LEBANON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL OR
REMOTE VIA VIRTUAL PLATFORM
6:30PM WEDNESDAY MAY 11, 2023**

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sean Dittrich (Alt.)

STAFF PRESENT: Mark Goodwin (GIS Coordinator)

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Riley called the meeting to order at 6:33pm.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: April 13, 2023

Amendments: Page 1, Line 1: Change “Chair Riley” to “Vice Chair Bruce James”

Page 2, Line 27: Change “limit” to “affect”

Page 3, Line 4: Add “and Sarah Riley” after “she” and add “and East Wilder Conservation Area” after “property”

A MOTION was made by Mr. Heistad to approve the April 13, 2023 minutes as amended. The Motion was seconded by Ms. Almy.

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

3. OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

No members of the public were present.

4. PERMIT REVIEW

None

5. STUDY ITEMS

A. 2023 Goals Review

Mr. Goodwin explained that the Commission members had identified three lists of Action Items:

1. Projects to undertake from the City’s Master Plan
2. Strategic Plan – Department work plans – actions proposed to happen over a 2-3 year window
3. List of goals for the year – list of brainstormed ideas developed at the start of each year

He said a list of desired goals for the group were identified in the February 2023 meeting. Mr. Goodwin said he compiled that list from the meeting minutes and developed a DRAFT copy of the Goals for 2023 and cross-checked it with the three lists of projects identified. He said this meeting's goal was to focus on the Goals for 2023. He said he noted the bulleted items on the list where a "who" and/or "when" needed to be identified. Mr. Goodwin shared a DRAFT copy of the Goals for 2023, which included the following sections:

- Property Stewardship
- Education/Outreach
- Land Conservation
- Miscellaneous

Property Stewardship

Ms. Hirai said the bulleted goal item related to signs/kiosks/maps should be moved to a fairly high priority. She also said maps are pretty unclear and need to be updated. She said they needed to create signs to communicate "closure due to restoration" and "no harvesting/foraging."

There was discussion about wildlife cameras on public properties and what regulations are in place to govern their use. Mr. Oidtmann said there's a camera that's been up for a few weeks overlooking the vernal pool on Farnum Hill. Ms. Hirai said Lebanon's new Ranger, John Tietjen, does have a camera installed. Chair Riley said she had not learned that cameras were installed until the Wild About Lebanon and she'd be interested to see what the cameras have captured. Mr. Heistad said he's seen cameras on Signal Hill. Chair Riley said she would email Ranger Tietjen and ask him if he has installed wildlife cameras and what he's been seeing.

Mr. Heistad said there was a question about whether residents who are allowed to walk on private property are now allowed to install cameras as well. Ms. Almy said the current regulations are vague as to whether people can put up cameras. She said it is being discussed in the State Senate. She said some hunters have been using cameras to hunt deer and this practice has not been appreciated by landowners and others. She said there is a proposed bill to require residents to put their names and telephone numbers on wildlife cameras, and, if they want to install them on private property, they will need the permission of the landowner before installation. Mr. Oidtmann said anyone who wants to install a camera on public land should also have to let the Commission know. Chair Riley asked if the City could enforce that kind of requirement.

Mr. Heistad said the NH Fish and Game Department may regulate this activity, as opposed to the state. Ms. Almy said all such regulations come through Joint Legislative Committee Administrative Roles (JLCAR). Chair Riley asked if any member of the Commission would contact the NH Fish and Game Department to clarify regulations so they can communicate them with residents and Mr. Oidtmann volunteered to contact them. Ms. Almy noted that the bill doesn't become law unless the Governor signs it, so it is not yet law. Mr. Johnson asked if someone could remove a camera from a property,

like someone might remove litter. Mr. Lacey said the cameras are not necessarily nefarious and the Commission may consider a more general way of educating the public. Mr. Johnson suggested language be added to the kiosks that residents need to notify the City before installing cameras. Mr. Goodwin noted that some wildlife cameras have been installed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service that has asked permission from the City. He said is not aware of the locations of these cameras and they may be moved around. Ms. Almy reminded the group that the law is being reviewed and the group should hold off on making any changes to regulations until that review is completed.

Mr. Goodwin noted the only item in the Property Stewardship section that still he identified as needing “Who” / “When” designations is related to Forest Management Plans. He said there is a current inventory of properties with management plans and the Commission needs to decide how much effort it wants to put into developing additional management plans. He said it should also look at the list of recommendations for the current management plans and see what it can accomplish. Mr. Goodwin said these plans are on the City’s website on the Conservation Commission / Properties page.

Ms. Almy asked Mr. Goodwin whether he, as GIS Coordinator, has control over updating the trail maps. Mr. Goodwin said he knows most maps had been updated as recently as two years ago and said every property on the map has an updated trail. Ms. Hirai said there are some discontinued trails that should be removed. Mr. Lacey said he used a LIDAR map for Two Rivers and it was hard to know what was there because it does not include trees. He said it’s nice when the trails on the kiosk could match what’s on the ground. Mr. Goodwin said more and more people using the trails are using interactive maps so it’s an on-going process to keep the maps up-to-date.

Chair Riley suggested a small working group be created to work with Mr. Goodwin to update the trail maps. Mr. Goodwin noted he has many projects and he often must prioritize them based on urgency. Mr. Johnson said he may be able to help with GIS projects because he knows people at Dartmouth College who also have GIS experience.

Education/Outreach

Chair Riley said she’d like to prioritize the bullet item related to aquifer/water resource. Ms. Almy suggested that the person at the state level in charge of Hydrogeology be contacted to provide information to the Commission. She said the members need to educate themselves before they try to educate others. Mr. Lacy said Mr. James was an expert on water issues. Mr. James said Hydrogeology is a complex topic but he may know someone who could conduct a day-long workshop about the City’s water resources, its rivers and wetlands, and groundwater, etc. Mr. Johnson said he could see if anyone at Dartmouth College could also be an educational resource on Hydrogeology. Ms. Hirai said perhaps the topic of outreach awareness should be the responsibility of someone working for the City instead of the Conservation Commission. Mr. Goodwin said outreach is typically an action item for the DPW. He said DPW Deputy Director Jim Anger used to work with businesses to educate them about potential pollution in the drinking water watershed.

Ms. Almy said there's a huge aquifer that was found near the water treatment plant. Mr. Goodwin noted that the location of the proposed well is in the floodway, but the City is working on moving it. Chair Riley said she would like to see the City's report on that aquifer. Mr. Goodwin suggested Chair Riley ask the City Manager to get a copy of that report, which he said was likely developed by the consultant who presented it to the City Council.

Mr. Oidtmann said a Mascoma River Cleanup is being organized for Saturday, July 22, 2023. He said several groups could participate, including: Lebanon Rotary Club, Hanover Rotary Club, High Schoolers, Young Professionals. He said the Commission can help by organizing volunteers and email the contact information to him. Chair Riley said the CRC website will probably not be ready in time to list the event and Mr. Oidtmann suggested it be included on listserv, and Mr. Goodwin said the Planning Board could disseminate a poster or other information about the event to its various sources.

Ms. Hirai asked that this bullet item be rewritten that the Commission "supports the efforts of the Rotary for the Mascoma Greenway Cleanup," instead of the Commission will "host" the event. She also asked that the work related to invasives be added to the Outreach section.

Land Conservation

Mr. Goodwin said the Commission should review the list of proposed action items from the Wildlife study because a major grant is available. Ms. Hirai said if they are looking at applying for grants for Wildlife Corridor projects in the Route 120 area, they could also look at other properties in the area to protect. Mr. Goodwin noted that Rte. 120 roadway is pretty high up and slopes down on both sides and there are wetlands to the west. He said to the east, several critters, like the snapping turtles, are always crossing Rte. 120. He suggested that a box culvert (which he said was one of the top recommendations from the Wildlife Corridor study) could be created but it would be a massive, disruptive project because Route 120 would have to be shut down during construction. He said the project might have a better chance if it could be added to a replacement project for an existing culvert. He said the Nicole Cormen Nature Preserve on one side of Rte. 120 and landmark properties on the other side with some of the highest value wetlands. He said, if it were able to be done, the project could also assist amphibian and small mammal connectivity and be almost a flagship project. Mr. Goodwin said the state may also say it within its control to do such a project, so there are many unknowns. Chair Riley said maybe the Commission could work with other Boards to work on grant writing for these types of projects.

Ms. Almy said she brought this item to the Planning Department last year: she said there is a parcel of about 17 acres of land near Baker's Crossing on the edge of Mascoma River that includes a wet meadow area. She said it gets dry enough that people picnic in the area and leave litter and debris. She said it is owned by the people who live in the new development next to Baker's Crossing. She said the owners have no interest in it. She said it is not sellable but she suggested the City could offer to take this parcel off the owners' hands in order to make it more protected. Chair Riley said she knows this area

but said she did not know how to protect it. She suggested a sign or Wildlife camera be added as a warning about leaving trash. Ms. Hirai said the Upper Valley Land Trust has more interest in protecting easements on land that is not currently being protected and if the land area could be expanded around Baker's Crossing, the UV Land Trust might be more interested in helping to put an easement on it. Chair Riley said the undeveloped land around Baker's Crossing is not contiguous with this parcel being discussed, but there are other undeveloped land between Baker's Crossing and the water. Ms. Hirai said it would be very desirable if those could all be connected. Mr. Oidtmann said he has a meeting with the Upper Valley Land Trust tomorrow (he is a trustee) and that group is working on many projects and is working on getting more land areas conserved in Lebanon. Chair Riley asked if he would discuss the parcel that Ms. Almy mentioned with the UV Land Trust. He said he would ask them if there's a possibility of preserving more land upstream from Baker's Crossing, but he said would need an accurate map when he talks to them.

Chair Riley said the Commission had talked about expanding steep slope regulations to all zones in the City. Mr. Goodwin confirmed there is no reason the regulations could not be expanded to all zones. He said the Commission members could start by identifying the issues the City may be experiencing on steep slopes and how adequate the current regulations are and then research what has been done in other communities. He said vernal pool research of other communities could be started now and may be a better choice of priority because it is an on-going concern, as opposed to steep slope regulations, which has not really been an issue for eight years or more. Ms. Hirai suggested the work they want to do with vernal pools could be tied to other conservation areas for grant applications. Mr. Goodwin also said the state came up with a number of template regulations that could also be a good starting point.

Miscellaneous

The group had a discussion about the regulations governing the LOST fund and whether all or some of the funds could be invested. Mr. Goodwin said he doesn't know the regulations, but he has gotten no real answers related to whether interest can be earned on the funds. He also said he did not know how to become a member of the governing group of the LOST fund (called the Trustees of the Trust Funds). Mr. Lacey noted the group was fortunate to have the funds and 100% access to it. Mr. Goodwin said the account is safe, but it might not get future funding. Ms. Hirai said she liked the idea of looking at lands to acquire and use the money wisely. Chair Riley said it could also be used for lands to protect.

Ms. Almy asked what LID techniques were, as included in the bullet related to communication with DPW regarding maintenance activities. Mr. Goodwin said LID stands for Low Impact Development. Chair Riley said when they were developing goals, she was trying to be more forward-thinking in terms of storm water management and replacing culverts to find solutions that would also be more wildlife friendly. She said that is why it is important to collaborate with DPW efforts so these ideas could be incorporated into planned projects. She mentioned the improvements planned for West Lebanon and the drainages that will be coming off the hill above Main Street. She said

there may be opportunities to make those drainages more like streams and make that area more wildlife friendly. Mr. Heistad said it would be wonderful for kids in downtown West Lebanon to see amphibians. Chair Riley said if the City does acquire the property at the base of Church Street West there is a stream in a yard that no one knows is there. She said it could be turned into a beautiful and functional pedestrian and/or bike park/corridor with the stream.

Mr. Goodwin said culvert replacement is a great opportunity to integrate these design ideas. He said they've had a report for about six years from the RPC that's an assessment of about 120 priority culverts that need replacement. He said usually culvert replacement has been more crisis-based but the City has hired a dedicated Asset Management person to get these projects done more proactively.

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Biodiversity Group (Invasives)

Workshop: Ms. Hirai said two foresters gave a talk (workshop) at 2 Rivers which was attended by about 25 people who seemed to enjoy it. She said people seemed to be interested in the most common invasives. Chair Riley noted that, since it has not been mowed in some time, some native floodplain species, like silver maples, are starting to grow in the meadow. Chair Riley said the foresters said to consider the area a recovering floodplain forest instead of a meadow and maintain it that way.

Garlic Mustard: Chair Riley said the garlic mustard has been pulled for the last three weeks. She said she and Ms. Hirai pulled garlic mustard at 2 Rivers three weeks ago. She noted that the garlic mustard was less dense where pulling had taken place two years ago. Mr. Lacey said he'd been pulling invasives from Baker's Crossing and, in the area of mile marker 135-8, there were eight flowering plants.

B. Stewardship

- Ranger

Mr. Lacey said Ranger Tietjen has been appointed and has been working at Baker's Crossing, but he is not an experienced chainsaw operator. He suggested he be sent for chainsaw safety training. Mr. Goodwin confirmed the new Ranger has been onboarded but is involved in the Science Olympiad and his science class is going to the national competition, so he will have a delayed start this season. In the meantime, Ron, the now-retired Ranger, is filling in. Mr. Goodwin said he receives weekly reports from Ron that he has been hitting the properties and trails. He said Ron gives his time as well as some money because he has to pay for gas and other supplies to go to all the trails. Ms. Hirai suggested a thank-you send-off be held for Ron. Mr. Oidtmann said he worked with Ranger Tietjen on Farnum Hill and he noted he should wear a helmet and face protection.

- Trail Coordinator

Mr. James said he contacted stewards and set times to go out to trails and see what they

think needs to be done. He said a few stewards have decided not to continue. He said Mr. Craig Sanborn, head of the Cardigan Highlanders Volunteer Trail Crew, has offered his expertise and assistance to the Commission. He said Mr. Sanborn is an expert related to building waterbars, treadway work, etc. He said he gave him a field book called *Maintenance and Rehab Guidelines for Volunteers* written by the Appalachian Trail Conference. He said it's a good resource on layout of different trails, drainage issues, treadway, safety. Mr. James suggested Mr. Sanborn could supervise a specific project (like building a waterbar) and a donation could be made to the Cardigan Highlanders Trail Crew. Ms. Almy asked if he might have some ideas about how to stabilize the staircase as the edge of Cole and Mr. James said he might. Chair Riley said it would be interesting to see what he'd say about some of the troublesome trails.

Mr. Heistad said as of 10 days ago, Signal Hill trail was clear around the pond, and as of three days ago, the road coming off Ben Hudson Parkway was clear also. Mr. James and Mr. Heistad said they would put up signs that Mark created.

Chair Riley said she heard there was some draining of a vernal pool at Signal Hill. Mr. James said someone cut drainage channels to drain the trail but also drained the vernal pool. Chair Riley said it is illegal to drain vernal pools. Mr. James said it was a wet area that should remain wet because it is part of the vernal pool system. Chair Riley asked if there could be another sign added that says it is illegal to drain a wetland.

- Monitors and Stewards

Ms. Hirai said she and Mr. James went to 2 Rivers and cleared the nexus of the pathways, which worked well for the workshop that was held there. Mr. Lacey said it was unclear how much more mowing needs to be done. Chair Riley suggested mowing the main path and then the trail cutting across diagonally (which is the short-cut trail that the fishermen use). She said this would fall in nicely with the idea of letting this be a forest and not so much a meadow, as the forester at the workshop suggested.

Ms. Hirai suggested the Commission conduct a site visit to determine exactly what should be maintained. Mr. Goodwin said those on the site visit should consider the two management approaches: let this be a natural area with one maintained trail or maintain the entire trail system (which takes a lot of effort). Ms. Hirai said if the trails are not maintained, residents are less likely to want to walk them. Chair Riley suggested the group may want to meet and review and set management goals for this area, considering the management approaches Mr. Goodwin suggested. Mr. Heistad noted that people of all ages/mobility levels should be considered when maintaining these trails. The group set a meeting date of Thursday, May 18 at 4:00pm for the site visit and said it would be open to the members of the community.

Ms. Hirai said something needs to be done about people who are harvesting plants. She said ramps were being dug up and said postings are needed, if not formal signs.

Chair Riley asked if the group should brainstorm events for Rotarian trail work. She said the Young Professionals are planning a cleanup on May 20 or 21. Mr. Johnson said he could attend.

C. Wild About Lebanon

Chair Riley said the April 22 Earth Day Walk was successful. She said it was attended by Land Trust Volunteer Coordinator, Cassie Bernik. She said hopefully the Commission will have many more collaborations with her.

D. Amphibian Crossings

Chair Riley reported that the Lions Club produced and collaborated with the DPW to post four amphibian signs at Heater Road by Hypertherm and Old Pine Tree Cemetery Road. Mr. Lacey said he saw the one on Heater Road was attached to the speed limit sign, so it is getting noticed.

E. LUCT/Current Use

No update

F. Other Subcommittees

Mr. Oidtmann said he is looking for apprentices for the Mascoma River Cleanup to eventually take over that effort. Ms. Hirai offered to help him make a binder of the guidelines so the transition to the next leader is easier. Mr. Oidtmann said he needs people at headquarters (at the Pavilion) to coordinate pickup trucks, etc.

Chair Riley noted that the Tree Board has been working on a tree ordinance and applying for an IRA grant to plant trees where less advantaged folks might need them (for example, planting shade trees around bus stops). Mr. Lacey said there are many parking lots that need trees for shade for dogs. Chair Riley said the Planning Board has provisions for many new proposed parking lots for the inclusion of shade trees that shade 30% of the lot within ten years. Chair Riley said the tree ordinance also has a goal to require the City to post any tree it wants to cut down on its property.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

A. FYIs

Chair Riley said there are no new FYIs, but she noted that the deadline for Pike Industries is May 18 but DES can give them another extension. She said she would contact DES on May 18 to determine status.

B. Follow Up

Mr. Lacey said last year, a woman had wanted to subdivide her property on Hardy Hill Road to sell it more easily. He said she had assured the Commission she was not

subdividing so a development could be put there. He said Dana Key bought it and his son, Andy, is building a house on it. He said Dana said Andy is very excited about spending time in the 18 acres of woods there. He said there will not be a development there.

Chair Riley said Master Plan Chapter 5 Natural Resources will be discussed at the May 22 Planning Board meeting / Public Hearing. She asked if the actual draft text of the chapter could be added to the website so residents can review it prior to the meeting.

C. Workshops and Educational Opportunities

Mr. Johnson said the Upper Valley Young Professionals asked if the Commission would run a conservation workshop to discuss the issues that face the Commission and how people can get involved. He said it seems like it would be a good way to encourage interest from this group. Chair Riley said she could reach out to the new volunteer steward (Cassie Bernik) at the Upper Valley Land Trust to give the workshop.

Chair Riley said she sent an email to the group about two upcoming training sessions on the last Friday in May and the last Friday in June. Chair Riley said she and Ms. Hirai would be attending the June 2 training in Concord that will help the Commission be more effective in reviewing wetland permits.

Mr. Heistad noted that the kiosk at Jackson is in parts and is awaiting assembly. Mr. Goodwin said that is a job on Ranger Teitjen's list. Ms. Hirai asked if the Upper Valley Young Professionals could help with that project. Mr. Johnson said he would ask if the group were interested. Chair Riley said the Jackson property could be a good one for the next Wild About Lebanon and said there has been interest in walks up there to see the trails, meadows, and the blueberries. Mr. Heistad said the blueberry plants need pruning, so a blueberry pruning workshop may be needed. Chair Riley said if there's enough interest, they could get a group together and give training and then have a pruning event.

8. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

9. ADJOURNMENT

A MOTION was made by Mr. Lacey to adjourn the meeting at 9:02pm. The Motion was seconded by Ms. Almy.

**** The vote on the Motion was approved 7-0.***

The meeting was adjourned at 9:02pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Paula Roux
Recording Secretary