

FINAL

**LEBANON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL OR
REMOTE VIA VIRTUAL PLATFORM
6:30PM WEDNESDAY JUNE 08, 2023**

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Bruce James (Vice Chair), Ernst Oidtman, Sean Dittrich (Alt.)

STAFF PRESENT: Mark Goodwin (GIS Coordinator)

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Riley called the meeting to order at 6:40pm.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: May 11, 2023

Amendments: Page 2, Line 17: Change “foresting” to “foraging”

Page 4, Line 9-10: Change “will” to “could”; remove “Boy Scouts” and “Girl Scouts”

Change “Almay” to “Almy” throughout the minutes DRAFT

A MOTION was made by Mr. Lacey to approve the May 11, 2023 minutes as amended. The Motion was seconded by Mr. Heistad.

Chair Riley approved the appointment of Ms. Hirai to sit in for Vice Chair Bruce James.

**** The Vote on the MOTION was approved (5-0 with Ms. Almy abstaining).***

3. OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

No members of the public were present.

4. PERMIT REVIEW

None

5. STUDY ITEMS

A. Boston Lot- Property Review

Chair Riley said the Committee will have a chance to review the Boston Lot Management Plan, compiled by Erhard Frost, Certified Forester, and Caitlin Cusak, Assistant Forester in 2011; follow-up on whether any recommendations made in the plan have been addressed through existing management plans; and begin the discussion of Boston Lot as a conservation property. Mr. Lacey said it was a wonderful summary of forestry in general. Chair Riley said she was impressed by the ecological focus of the report.

Mr. Goodwin said he discussed the Plan with Ron. He gave an overview of what actions have been taken since the plan was written:

- Some actions have been taken (for example, flag and blaze the Boston Lot addition and the boundaries)
- Trail maintenance (control invasive species) – not really any action taken

Chair Riley said one of the main recommendations Mr. Frost made throughout the plan is to tackle invasives. She said Mr. Frost noted that he did not observe invasives in only two of the 12 stands in Boston Lot. She also noted that the plan is not trail-based but is stand-based. Mr. Goodwin said invasives have spread throughout the area. He said it would be very difficult to try to remove all the invasives from each stand. Mr. Heistad said the Committee needs a plan in mind that includes care of what we have. Mr. Lacey suggested the Committee could focus on certain areas to clear invasives (for example, near vernal pools) as opposed to entire stands. Ms. Hirai said the Committee could evaluate the trails to see if some could be closed off to prevent the spread of more invasives.

Chair Riley asked if any of the plan's recommendations related to invasives were taken since 2011. Mr. Goodwin said he did not think so. Mr. Heistad agreed. Ms. Almy said the only thing that was done was to clear the top of Signal Hill.

- Harvest timber as a revenue source for the City – not done because shift in focus

Mr. Goodwin said when the plan was written, it was a goal of the City to harvest the wood on Boston Lot. He said now, the City is focused on leaving wood on site, especially on Signal Hill, to encourage the development of carbon rich soil. He said there may never be a harvest. Chair Riley said the Commission should identify its current goals regarding harvesting – and determine if it will improve the health of the species populations.

The group discussed over-browse by deer in the area, and Ms. Hirai suggested the doe hunting program started by Barbara MacElroy could be employed as a trial in the Boston Lot area. She said the program involves allowing each hunter to take more than one doe in certain areas only. She said if the program was successful in Boston Lot, property owners could be encouraged to try it. She said Ms. MacElroy has had improvement in plant regrowth after implementing the program.

Ms. Almy said a conservation cut had been done behind Martin Brook around the year 2000. She said the area had been clear cut about 70 years before and all the trees had grown to the same height and were shading out the undergrowth. She said they did some glades for the deer and, the next year, the buckthorn started to come in.

Mr. Goodwin said foresters today recommend making selective cuts to release a stand that is too tightly populated with trees and make it much healthier.

Chair Riley reviewed the individual recommendations in the Plan:

- Identify beech trees that are resistant to Beech Bark Disease and release them by cutting surrounding trees
- Encourage development of disease-resistant chestnut trees in certain stands that have “dry, warm, west-facing slopes”
- Maintain uncut protective 150-foot buffer around the lake
- Cut in near lake Stand 1 to open it for turtles and snakes –to create openings around rock outcrops
- Consider periodic group selection harvests with perpetual legacy tree retention – to promote diversity.

Ms. Hirai said they would need to hire a forester for selective cutting. Chair Riley said she sent the plan to the county forester for his review. She said he plans to come to speak with the Conservation Commission in the future.

Chair Riley said the plan repeatedly stated that the stands are “heading toward canopy dominance of beech and hemlock” trees and the plan suggested the City should consider removing some of these to encourage red and white oak tree growth, and other species.

She noted the plan encourages “a judicious and thoughtful approach to harvesting increases diversity and complexity while protecting ecologically sensitive areas and producing revenue.” She said he identified two “overarching objectives of the Commission at the time the plan was written: increase biodiversity and improve forest resiliency in the face of climate change” and other threatening pests.

Mr. Goodwin noted that the City would have to hire a skilled forester to carry out the recommendations of the plan. He said he would reach out to Mr. Frost and talk to him about what time and expense would be involved in executing the plan.

Ms. Hirai noted that the group’s discussion had not included trails to this point. Chair Riley said they would discuss trails at the next meeting. Ms. Almy said they also need to talk about debris that has been found in the lake.

B. Alternative Drinking Water Source – Review & Discussion

Chair Riley said the City has identified a potential site for a well near the wastewater treatment facility that would be an alternate drinking water source. She noted that the

2021 report about the site she received from the City Manager was included in the meeting agenda packet. Mr. Goodwin shared a map of the proposed site with the group.

Chair Riley said the report states that ownership of a 400-foot protective radius around the well would be required by DES. She said that a 400-foot radius around the proposed site extends into the 2 Rivers Conservation land. She said the DES may also require a change of land use for public access to the boat launch to prevent access within the protective radius. She is concerned about the impact to users of the boat launch, such as the Lebanon Fire Department, which needs access to the boat launch to provide service for emergencies associated with the Interstate 89 highway bridge. She said the report also suggests potentially moving the boat launch.

Chair Riley said she'd like the Commission members to note their questions and concerns about the proposed site, which could be presented to the City Manager.

Ms. Hirai asked if the silver maples would be cut down if the well were drilled at the location, and Chair Riley said only one or two trees would be cut if the well is a small one. Ms. Hirai asked if another water treatment plant would have to be built, and Chair Riley said that was not included in the documentation.

Chair Riley said she is concerned that the Conservation Committee has not been more involved in the discussion about sites for the well. Mr. Goodwin noted that this report is a very initial step in the process and the City is just looking for a site with enough water. He said there is a process once a site is found that includes discussion of concerns and questions.

Ms. Almy asked if there needs to be some kind of enclosure (for example, a fence) around the 400-foot buffer area, as is the case in Hanover. Chair Riley said she is also concerned that a new well will draw attention away from protecting the existing drinking water source.

Chair Riley said she would reach out to the City and ask to be included in the discussions about the proposed site. Mr. Goodwin said the Conservation Committee may have a role in the discussions as they progress. Mr. Heistad suggested the group should review the regulations involved. Ms. Almy said she would speak to her DES contact about the proposed site.

Chair Riley noted that Mr. Johnson had identified a hydrogeologist at Dartmouth but was going to wait until after commencement to speak to him about possibly talking to the Conservation Commission in the future.

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Biodiversity Group (Invasives)

Mr. Lacey said the Dartmouth Outing Club did a good job of taking down its paraphernalia after the kayak races. He also noted the City has planted a sycamore tree in the northeast corner of Colburn Park and said it might be successful there.

He said he mowed a path through the meadow at 2 Rivers but he could not mow at the Signal Hill entrance because the hill was too steep for his mower. Chair Riley said she would put out a call for volunteers to mow the trail on a regular basis and would have interested volunteers contact Mr. Heistad and Mr. Goodwin for details.

Garlic Mustard: Ms. Hirai said she and Chair Riley pulled garlic mustard on the Rail Trail (Mascoma River Greenway) and talked about using a piling technique (leaving the pulled plants in piles in the area) to control regrowth.

B. Stewardship

- Ranger

Mr. Lacey said Ranger Tietjen is finishing up the school year and is involved in the Science Olympiad, but he has been out replacing signs. He recommended that Ranger Tietjen participate in chainsaw training.

- Trail Coordinator

No update

- Monitors and Stewards

No update

C. Wild About Lebanon

No update

D. Amphibian Crossings

No update

E. LUCT/Current Use

No update

F. Other Subcommittees

No update

7. OTHER BUSINESS

A. FYIs

None

B. Follow Ups

None

C. Workshops and Educational Opportunities

None

8. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Paula Roux
Recording Secretary