

FINAL

**LEBANON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL OR
REMOTE VIA VIRTUAL PLATFORM
6:30PM THURSDAY JANUARY 11, 2024**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sarah Riley (Chair), Donald Lacey, Barbara Hirai, Erling Heistad (City Council Rep.), Ernst Oidtmann, Bruce James (Vice Chair), Chris Johnson, Susan Almy (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. Mr. Goodwin reviewed the City's meeting in-person and REMOTE attendance policies and procedures.

2. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Chair Riley noted that Ms. Almy is now an alternate, non-voting member and Ms. Hirai is now a voting, regular member.

A MOTION was made by Erling Heistad to nominate Sarah Riley as Chair of the Conservation Commission. The Motion was seconded by Barbara Hirai.

Roll Call Vote:

Voting in Favor – Ms. Hirai, Mr. Lacey, Mr. Heistad, Dr. Oidtmann, Mr. James, Mr. Johnson

Voting Against – None

***The MOTION was approved (6-0).**

A MOTION was made by Ernst Oidtmann to nominate Bruce James as Vice Chair of the Conservation Commission. The Motion was seconded by Chris Johnson.

Roll Call Vote:

Voting in Favor – Ms. Hirai, Mr. Lacey, Mr. Heistad, Dr. Oidtmann, Mr. James, Ms. Riley Mr. Johnson

Voting Against – None

***The MOTION was approved (7-0).**

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES December 14, 2023

Amendments:

Change “Richert” to “Reichert” throughout the text

Page 1 Add Attorney Barry Schuster and Dan Nash to OTHERS PRESENT

Page 1: Change “No members of the public were present” to “No members of the public spoke”

Page 2, Line 8: Delete “available”

Page 2, Line 17&18: Change “and they have a special habitat to many wildlife species” to “and they provide habitat for wildlife species”

Page 3, Line 4: Add “stated that” after “Purcell”

Page 3 Line 31-34: Clarify “Chair Riley said she had concerns about adding housing to the area”

Page 3, Line 40: Delete “District A”

Page 3, Line 43: Add “District” after “Riverbank Protection”; Change “add an urban exemption” to “and assumes that the City has an urban exemption”

Page 4, Line 3 Add “an issue separate to the proposed change” after “urban exemption” and strike the next sentence

Page 5, Line 32: Change “RSA –671” to “RSA 674-21”

Page 6, Line 23 Change “is supposed to be for forestry” to “shows the entire area as green (rural)”

Page 6, Line 27: Add Protecting Scenic Ridge line and in the City”

Page 8, Line 5 Add “Sales & Service” after “automobile”

Page 9 Line 11& 13: Change “Barton” to “Barden”

Page 16 Line 16: Add “Hirai needs to be clear that prior approval on Conservation Land.”

A MOTION was made by Barbara Hirai to approve the December 14, 2023 Meeting Minutes as amended. The Motion was seconded by Erling Heistad.

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

4. OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Chair Riley introduced Mr. Brandon Hill, who she said has expressed interest in becoming a member of the Conservation Commission. Chair Riley welcomed Mr. Hill to join the discussion or to ask any questions he had.

5. PERMIT REVIEW

None

6. STUDY ITEMS

A. Strategic Planning – Annual Goals and Workplan

Included in the meeting agenda packet materials were:

- Action items that resulted from the Commission’s review of Chapter 5 of the Master Plan
- A list of high priority action items from the Strategic Plan

- The Conservation Commission's 2023 goals for the Strategic Plan

The Commission engaged in a long discussion about how to craft its annual goals and work plan. The group reviewed the agenda material items and made modifications that resulted in the following DRAFT outline of the Conservation Commission's 2024 goals for the Strategic Plan:

Property Stewardship

- **Conservation Property Management Plans**

Review existing plans and identify properties that don't have plans and develop plans for them – Example Boston Lot); More engagement related to recommended action/activities (MP 5.4b.2) Who/When?

[Ms. Hirai suggested an alternate heading "Forest Health Plan" for this item. Chair Riley said she has a goal for this year to focus on the Boston Lot property and have the county forester or another vernal pool expert walk the property. She also suggested a day of activities at Boston Lot (in lieu of a Wild About Lebanon event) where residents can learn more about the lake and the property. The group talked about the changing perspective of forest management and forest health.]

[Mr. James suggested that a couple of Commission members work on identifying the Commission's broad forest management plans and list more specific goals that can be accomplished in 2024. He said a more in-depth discussion about Forest Management could be held at the special meeting to discuss just Commission activities/plans (this was an idea he suggested last month) when there is more time. Dr. Oidtmann said it behooves the Commission to review the conservation easements on conservation lands before management plans are made.]

- **Review gaps and needs for infrastructure**, e.g., footbridges, etc. (MP 5.4b.2)
- **Signage/Kiosks/Map** resources (MP 5.4b.2) (SP 5.7.2)
 - ~ **Trail Maintenance** (including on-going care of existing trails by Ranger) (MP 5.4b.2 & MP 5.4b.5) (SP 5.7.3)
 - ~ Collaborate with the **Nature Conservancy on the Elm Tree Restoration** project (SP 5.6.1)
 - ~ Review **Alana Cole trail for compliance with ADA** access (an existing MP action item; possible Strategic Plan item)

Education / Outreach

[Outreach and courses for school children were discussed. Chair Riley said there are environment-based courses and at the high school. Ms. Hirai said there is an environmental studies club. The group noted that younger people are very interested in protecting the environment and climate change]

- Workshop for ConCom to **increase awareness of aquifer/water resource status**, including future plans. (MP 5.6a.7) (SP 5.8.1) Who/When?

- Increased **ConCom knowledge of general topic of water resource** (internal education for ConCom members) Who/When/How?

[Mr. Johnson said he spoke with Dr. Carl Renshaw (hydrologist and Professor of Earth Sciences at Dartmouth College) who seemed open to holding educational workshops on water resources.]

- Continued support for **Wild About Lebanon** (MP 5.6a.5) (SP 5.7.1)
 - ~ Develop and disseminate **public education materials regarding the importance of protecting our water supply sources** (SP 5.8.1) (Have Lebanon become a municipal partner in the NH DES's **Soak up the Rain** program)

[Ms. Almy asked if DPW was already doing many of these activities related to storm water mitigation. She said her road has not suffered from major flooding, which had been happening over and over a few years ago. Chair Riley said, when Prospect Street was redone, she requested that DPW inform affected residents about the "Soak Up The Rain" options, but she said she did not believe DPW did that level of outreach to individuals.]

- ~ Host **Amphibian Crossing Program** (SP5.9.4)
 - ~ Host annual **Mascoma River clean-up** (SP 5.8.3)
 - ~ Propose the creation of a **River Keeper position** to the City, including assigning role to an existing staff position; perhaps a contracted (consultant) position or volunteer position
 - ~ Participation with the pending **Upper Valley Healthy Forest Working** group
 - ~ Increased awareness and encouragement for **land protection** (MP 5.6a.4)
- Who/When/How?

Land Conservation

- **Add to the conservation portfolio of conservation land** within the City of Lebanon (MP 5.4a.1) (SP 5.6.2)
- Review and modify (as needed) existing regulations related to **Open Space protection** (e.g., **ridgeline, aquifer, steep slopes**, etc.) (MP 5.2b.2 & MP 5.5a.4) ** Steep slopes are priority

[The group debated at length about which regulatory tool / overlay district should have more priority: ridgeline, vernal pool or steep slopes. The consensus was that regulations / protections related to steep slopes are the first priority of the three.]

- As part of the **Wetland Permit process**, have grants / grant proposals at the ready to be able to engage in **mitigation projects** as they arise.

[Ms. Almy said a problem is finding land and owners who are willing to conserve their land or sell their land as conservation land. Chair Riley said DES is no longer favoring mitigation as the first-choice solution regarding wetlands. She suggested the Commission should identify projects and partners for projects to help get grants and/or write grant proposals to be ready to purchase land.]

- ~ Work with the **Upper Valley Land Trust** regarding permanently protecting **Baker's Crossing** (SP 5.6.2)

[Dr. Oidtmann said he would bring up Baker's Crossing at the next Upper Valley Land Trust meeting. He said he would also ask about the property across from Signal Hill.]

- ~ Implement recommendations from the **wildlife corridor plans** (SP 5.9.3)
- ~ Examine the applicability of a **vernal pool overlay district** (SP 5.9.2)
- ~ Conduct review of existing **steep slope regulations** (SP 5.9.1)

Miscellaneous

- Increased communication regarding **DPW maintenance activities, future well plans, stormwater initiatives** (e.g., LID techniques, water quality protection, etc.)
- **LOST Fund Investment Strategies** Who/When/How?

[Chair Riley said she would ask the City's Assistant Director of Finance how the LOST Fund is invested (if at all).]

- Collaboration / Communication between ConCom and **proposed redevelopment plans for West Lebanon** Who/When/How?

[Chair Riley encouraged Conservation Commission members to attend a West Lebanon Revitalization Committee meeting.]

- ~ Evaluate Lebanon participation in the **NH Fish & Wildlife doe harvest program** (SP 5.6.3)
- ~ Innovative **stormwater regulations** that exist in the Site Plan regulations to be migrated to the **sub-division regulations as appropriate** (SP 5.8.2)
- ~ Incorporate (to the maximum extent possible) **green infrastructure** and **wildlife crossing** into the **Exit 18 redesign project** (MP action item. Request that it be put in the Strategic Plan.)
- ~ Incorporate **aquatic organism passage** and **wildlife friendly designs** into **culvert replacement projects** city-wide in line with NH Stream Crossing Initiative. (MP 5.2.22)
does it get to SP
- ~ Work with DPW to **reduce road salt use** near sensitive habitat areas.

[The group and Mr. Hill had a discussion about what materials are used in "fill dirt" and what regulations may be in place regarding "fill dirt."]

A MOTION was made by Barbara Hirai to extend the meeting to 9:05pm.

Voting in Favor – Ms. Riley, Ms. Hirai, Mr. Heistad, Dr. Oidtmann, Mr. James

Voting Against – Mr. Lacey, Mr. Johnson

****The MOTION was approved (5-2).***

[The group had a discussion about the overabundance of deer and the lack of predators which contributes to the overpopulation problem. They discussed the importance of doe hunting and

education to encourage hunters to help control the deer population.]

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Biodiversity Group (Invasives)

No update

B. Stewardship

Ranger

Trail Coordinator

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

G. OTHER BUSINESS

A. FYIs

None

B. Follow Ups

None

C. Workshops and Educational Opportunities

None

H. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:05pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Paula Roux
Recording Secretary