

FINAL

**LEBANON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL OR
REMOTE VIA VIRTUAL PLATFORM
6:30PM THURSDAY FEBRUARY 08, 2024**

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Donald Lacey, Chris Johnson, Sean Dittrich (Alt.), Brandon Hill (Alt.)

STAFF PRESENT: Mark Goodwin (GIS Coordinator)

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Riley called the meeting to order at 6:36pm.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES January 11, 2024

A MOTION was made by Erling Heistad to approve the January 11, 2024 Meeting Minutes. The Motion was seconded by Ernst Oidtmann.

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

3. OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

No one from the public spoke.

4. PERMIT REVIEW

None

Chair Riley moved the **Study Item** discussion to the end of the meeting, which is out of the order on the meeting agenda. The group discussed **Other Business / Committee Reports** next.

Dr. Oidtmann said that the CCBA owns 20 acres of land. He said he would talk with the CCBA and Upper Valley Land Trust about possibly making that conservation land.

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Biodiversity Group (Invasives)

Ms. Hirai gave an overview of the Forest Health Group meeting led by Barbara McElroy. She said it was attended by Upper Valley Land Trust and other Upper Valley conservation commissions. She said the group is planning an initial series of workshops, which will include hands-on workshops and field days:

- Forest Health in General
- Understory and Overbrowse
- Changes to Forests: Invasives Climate Change Insect Damage

B. Stewardship

Chair Riley said she and other members of the Commission walked around Boston Lot Lake with County Forester Jim Frohn.

[Ms. Almy arrived at the meeting at 6:45pm.]

Chair Riley said the key takeaways from the walk were:

- It is a very even-aged forest
- There is some regeneration but not as much as he expected
- There is not a lot of diversity in structure
- The blowdown in northwestern quadrant will provide diversity in cover/shelter/habitat

Mr. James noted that there have been a lot of blowdowns and there will be a lot of cleanup to do in the spring.

Ms. Hirai said during the Point in Time Count on January 25, there were no occupied tents found on Conservation Land.

Chair Riley said she received a balance for the LOST fund. She said she will share the whole document when she gets a copy. She said about \$30,000 in interest had been earned on the account.

She reminded the group that she had previously shared (via email) a definition of Environmental Justice by the DEI Environmental Justice Task Force. She also said she shared the activity of the Tree Advisory Board and the draft Tree Ordinance that will be going to the City Council next month.

Ms. Hirai noted that Chair Riley also emailed a link to the NHACC Zoom workshops. She said the first one was on stewardship for wildlife management. Chair Riley said the series is called, "Taking Action for Wildlife."

Dr. Oidtmann said he's had no contact with the DOT group that is involved in the Exit 18 project.

Ms. Almy said she contacted the state hydrogeologist, Andrew Koff. She said she told him the City sometimes has had trouble locating some of the smaller underground aquifers. She said Mr.

Koff said Greg Smith is contracted by the state for the new well project in Lebanon. She said he said part of the research for that project was a review of the entire City and the location of the aquifers may be included in that documentation. She said perhaps Mr. Smith would share that information with the City.

C. Wild About Lebanon

No update

D. Amphibian Crossings

No update

E. LUCT/Current Use

No update

F. Other Subcommittees

No update

5. STUDY ITEMS

A. Property Stewardship Discussion

Chair Riley shared an outline for the property stewardship discussion. The group discussed how to work with the outline and add goals/action items that can be accomplished this year.

Conservation Lands/Trails

Mr. Goodwin said the City owns approximately 21 miles of trails and about 2,000 acres of Conservation properties, (including but not limited to):

- Farnum Hill
- Alana Cole
- Chambers
- Ticknor
- Signal Hill
- Star Hill
- Trues Brook
- Mill Parcel
- Boston Lot

He said default maintenance tasks include:

- Blazing boundaries – Mr. Goodwin said it really is reblazing / repainting existing boundaries. He said he maintains a spreadsheet that tracks the blazing schedule for the properties. He said the goal is to reblaze every five years. He said it might take a few days to blaze a whole property.

Mr. James noted that some property owners want to manage conservation boundaries that about their properties differently than how the City wants to do it. Chair Riley said conservation outreach should address this issue. Ms. Hirai said walking the boundaries could

be done between the blazing schedule, and that could reveal issues with owners that can be addressed.

- Monitoring – Mr. Goodwin said most properties are monitored annually by the easement holder, which includes walking the boundaries. He said the UVLT has easements on most conservation properties, and the City has easements on only three conservation properties near the Lebanon Airport.

The group discussed the effectiveness of the trail kiosks and other signage ideas, and how they could best be used. Ms. Hirai said the kiosks should explain which trails are connector trails. Mr. James said Ranger John's new signs are excellent. Mr. Goodwin said the signage is important to let people know the land is being monitored and it is not forgotten land. Mr. James suggested signage could include images and information about wildlife in the area, like what is done in the White Mountain trails.

- Brush hogging – Mr. Goodwin said Signal Hill, LeBrun Meadow, and Jackson are done every year. The group discussed mowing strategies around trees growing in the meadows and how the different kinds of open space (and their edges) should be mowed/maintained to protect birds and other wildlife. The group also discussed prescribed burns as an option to conservation land management.

Mr. Goodwin said DPW has not been able to do as much maintenance as it has in the past because of staffing issues. He said the contractor who has done brush hogging in the past hopefully can come back this year.

The group discussed strategies to control the spread of the buckthorn invasive species, which is seen everywhere around Lebanon. Chair Riley said the City may have to hire a crew to cut/pull large expanses that are overgrown with buckthorn.

Ms. Hirai noted that only licensed personnel can use pesticides on Conservation Lands. She said right now, only Mr. Lacey is licensed, and she suggested the City sponsor licensing for others so they can also work on Conservation Land.

- Trail Maintenance – Mr. Goodwin said trail maintenance involves assessment of the condition of the trails and getting drainage up and running for five or six trails.

Ms. Hirai suggested "Cleaning up homeless camps" could be another default maintenance task.

Mr. Goodwin said he also maintains a list of reported items / miscellaneous maintenance items for each property:

- Missing signs / sign suggestions
- Downed trees identified
- Trail brushing (pushing back growth on trails to clear them)

- Miscellaneous maintenance (ex: remove broken picnic table)
- Projects (wish list items)

Chair Riley said additional projects not included on Mr. Goodwin's list could be added to the list that was created in 2022.

Ms. Hirai said she would like the group to discuss the following:

- Effectiveness of Volunteer Recruitment tools – Ms. Hirai said volunteer recruitment tools, such as the link on the Conservation Commission webpage, are not working as well as planned. She said recruitment efforts have fallen off since the pandemic. The group discussed strategies to attract volunteers. Mr. James noted stewards have signed up who have not actually participated. He said it might be a good time to encourage new people to join the stewardship program again. Dr. Oidtmann suggested contacting organizations, such as bike clubs, hiking outfits, the Lions Club, the Rotary Club, Hypertherm, and church organizations, to see if groups might be interested in helping as a social event.

Ms. Hirai said personal outreach / contact with volunteers has been effective in the past. Mr. James said specific project events may be easier to recruit volunteer groups from organizations. Mr. Heistad suggested making a list of email addresses for all volunteers to contact for projects.

The group agreed to keep the current methods for volunteers recruitment, and to use other methods to attract and coordinate volunteers as well. Mr. Heistad suggested Conservation Commission activities / volunteer opportunities be posted at outdoor gear shops. Mr. James suggested Commission members attend club meetings and give a short talk about the Conservation Commission activities and have a sign-up sheet for volunteers. Ms. Hirai suggested a Wild About Lebanon event on how to be a good steward.

Mr. Goodwin said if trails are not maintained by the City, people may feel that they will have to clear the trails themselves if they want to use them. The group discussed the possibility of hiring a crew to maintain trails in addition to the work of volunteers and Ranger John.

Chair Riley suggested an exercise with the Trails for People and Wildlife tool would be helpful. She said an expert can come review all trails in Lebanon and see what the impacts are. She said the City could ultimately decide that some trails should be discontinued. She said Trails for People and Wildlife is a tool designed by UNH and NH Fish & Game.

Dr. Oidtmann said the Commission needs to document current trails and deal with the "spontaneous trails" that people create without permission. He said they also need to read the easements for each property, which spell out a lot of conditions that they have to adhere to. He read the easement language for the Indian Ridge property.

Chair Riley gave an update of the status of the transfer of the Indian Ridge easement from Hanover to Lebanon. She said the City Manager said the easement would go to the Planning

Department once it is transferred. She said the easement gives Dartmouth College the right to put a road through the area. She said the City may also want to put a road through the area for a third fire station.

The group discussed how the Commission needs to be more directly involved in what's happening in the Planning Department. Chair Riley said they should meet with the Planning Director to get an update on Indian Ridge and express its concerns about Mink Brook and the wildlife corridor in that area.

- Properties with no Management Plans – continue discussion at a future meeting

A MOTION was made by Erling Heistad to extend the meeting to 9:30pm. The motion was seconded by Sarah Riley.

Mr. James suggested the meeting be extended to 9:15pm.

An AMENDED MOTION was made by Erling Heistad to extend the meeting to 9:15pm. The motion was seconded by Sarah Riley.

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

The group decided to continue the discussion about the following topics to the next meeting:

- Invite the Planning Director to the next meeting to discuss Indian Ridge and other connector projects
- Properties with no management plans
- Stewardship / management plan spreadsheet for each property
- Make management plan information more accessible and have a conservation plan that guides what needs to be done

8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Paula Roux
Recording Secretary