

FINAL

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sarah Riley (Chair), Bruce James (Vice Chair) (REMOTE), Barbara Hirai, Erling Heistad (City Council Rep.), Ernst Oidtmann, Donald Lacey, Brandon Hill (Alt)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sean Dittrich (Alt.), Chris Johnson, Susan Almy (Alt.)

STAFF PRESENT: Mark Goodwin (GIS Coordinator)

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Riley called the meeting to order at 6:32pm. Mr. Goodwin reviewed the City's meeting in-person and REMOTE attendance policies and procedures.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES March 14, 2024

Amendments:

Page 3, Line 28/29: Edit text to say abutment is red and rip rap is blue on map

Page 5, Line 12: Add "said" after Riley

Page 5, Line 20: Change "Snowmobile" to "Riverside"

Page 5, Line 25: Change "McElroy" to "McIlroy"

At 6:37pm, Chair Riley approved the appointment of Mr. Hill to sit in for Chris Johnson.

A MOTION was made Don Lacey by to approve the March 14, 2024 Meeting Minutes as amended. The Motion was seconded by Erling Heistad.

Roll Call Vote:

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

Voting Against – None

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

3. OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

No one from the public spoke.

4. PERMIT REVIEW

None

Chair Riley moved **Study Item 5C** to the top of the meeting, which is out of the order on the meeting agenda.

5. STUDY ITEM

C. Boston Lot Review & Discussion

Chair Riley said this discussion would focus on a review of the trail network on Boston Lot. She referenced a map that was included in the agenda packet for this meeting.

Mr. James presented several informational sign samples. He suggested the signs at Boston Lot should list what uses/activities are permitted and prohibited on Conservation Land trails.



The group reviewed a Boston Lot map (see right) and noted the trails that are both inside and outside the Boston Lot boundaries (purple lines). Mr. James noted that the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association (UVMBA) manages a series of trails it established from Burnt Mountain Trail and how permitted activities and rules sometimes are different within Conservation Land than outside Conservation areas. The group discussed adding “You are entering Boston Lot” signs with lists of restrictions at appropriate points where the trails cross the boundaries.

Chair Riley said the group needs to determine what trails in Boston Lot should be continued and which, if any, should be discontinued regardless of how they were established. Mr. Goodwin said bikes are allowed on the red trails (see map), whereas the dashed lines are trails where bikes are not allowed.

The group discussed whether some trails with low rise or poor drainage should be reinforced so bike use would not damage them. Mr. Lacey noted that the UVMBA did a lot of work to minimize damage from bikes on the trails it manages, and perhaps the Commission should work with UVMBA to help build up other trails. Mr. Hill suggested trails could be rerouted around consistently wet areas. Mr. Goodwin said that might be a huge undertaking that would involve cutting trees and a lot of other work. Mr. James said in the White Mountains, they use puncheon (slightly raised board bridges) to raise the treadway instead of rerouting trails.

Chair Riley suggested Mr. James work with a small group to evaluate the existing trails in Boston Lot to determine what should be done, which could include the following:

- Hardening
- Raising up
- Rerouting
- Closing

Mr. James said he could rough out a map and proposal and bring it back to the Commission for its review. Chair Riley asked him to include vernal pools and water/wetland areas so the group can see the impact trails might have on those areas. Ms. Hirai suggested that a rubric should be developed to aid in creating and using a set of criteria by which to evaluate each trail. Mr. Hill said he would work with Mr. James to evaluate the trails on Boston Lot, make note of the conditions, take photos, and give ideas of what would be best for each trail going forward. Dr. Oidtmann suggested asking the Bike Association to participate in the evaluation.

The group discussed other rules/policies that possibly could be included on trail signs:

- Bike speed limit
- Bike and pedestrian sides or “lanes”
- Pedestrian priority
- Fire policy (may or may not include rules involving smoking or vaping)
- “Leave No Trace” policy

At 7:30pm, Mr. James left the meeting.

Mr. Hill said he and Mr. James will note the signage that may or may not exist on each trail while they are evaluating conditions.

A. FERC Wilder Dam Relicensing Comment Period Update

Mr. Goodwin gave an update on the status of the Wilder Dam Relicensing project. He said now is the time for the City to make comments and put in requests to be incorporated into the licensing requirements. He said Parks, Arts, and Recreation Director Paul Coats has submitted a list of requests and concerns raised by his department.

Mr. Heistad said riverbank erosion is a problem. He suggested they could request a general contribution to a kitty or fund that could be used to address it on a case-by-case basis.

Chair Riley suggested that items in the Natural Resource Chapter of the Master Plan could be considered, particularly recommendations from the 2016 Wildlife Crossing Study:

- Increased wildlife crossing signage
- Maintain road to canoe portage

She said it would be good to slow traffic down where the wildlife signage would be located, which would involve NH DOT.

Chair Riley said the deadline for comments is now May 22. Mr. Goodwin said the Commission should compile its ideas into a letter that should be signed by Chair Riley.

Ms. Hirai said the Commission could suggest that the fluctuation in the river level be reduced, and asked if the Commission could get a report about when the river levels fluctuate. Mr. Goodwin said it could be added as a concern.

The group discussed the idea that it would be beneficial to have a fund to use as needs arise for projects or to support educational programs.

Chair Riley said that Kate Buckman of the CRC had noted she expected more mitigation measures related to water quality and wildlife and habitat concerns. She said the CRC also hopes to see the dedication of time and resources to study the impacts of the run of the river.

Ms. Hirai suggested that the Commission reach out to other towns and see what concerns/requests they may have and consider adding some or all of them to the letter it will submit. She noted that it may be impactful if several communities ask for the same things. Mr. Goodwin said he can share information received as online feedback.

Chair Riley also said fish passage and the proximity to the dam, which was raised as a concern in the NRI, should be included. Mr. Lacey said he would scan documents from the FERC/CRC for references to ecological or rare organisms in the NRI and look for specific recommendations.

Chair Riley said she would write a draft of the letter with the Commission's concerns and share it with group via email. She asked that suggestions could be sent back to her individually and not as a group (to avoid improper group "meeting" without public notice). She said she would bring a complete draft to the next meeting for the group to review/comment/approve for submittal.

B. Property Stewardship Discussion (continued)

Chair Riley said this item would be postponed until the next meeting.

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Biodiversity Group (Invasives)

Chair Riley said the Forest Health Group meetings kickoff next week. She asked Commission members to hang copies of the program in areas, including:

- CCBA
- CoOps
- Grocery stores
- Kiosk at the Lebanon Mall
- Hanover sites

Chair Riley said that the agenda for the April 17 City Council meeting includes a request to the utility providers to modify the ways that vegetation is managed within the right of way for power lines. She said that Mr. Lacey was reviewing the letter that would be sent from the City Council to the utilities.

Mr. Lacey explained that the letter asked the utilities to stop using herbicides to manage vegetation, and he said he was editing it to request targeted use of herbicides instead. He said not all herbicides are bad. Mr. Heistad noted the letter was originally written without the Commission's input. Chair Riley asked the Commission members to attend the April 17 meeting for this discussion.

Mr. Lacey said someone from Dartmouth Outing Club marked some trees in Bakers Crossing to indicate where the club will hang their gates for an upcoming kayak event. He said he had asked the club previously to let him know the dates of the event, but he had not been notified. He asked if Commission members could reach out to club members and ask them again to notify the Commission when the event will occur.

The group discussed the Emerald Ash Borer and the areas in which it has been seen.

Ms. Hirai said she was contacted by a volunteer coordinator at Hypertherm about a group of employees that would like to work on Conservation Land. The Commission members discussed activities that the volunteers could do and agreed a Commission member should help lead and supervise the activities.

Chair Riley noted that garlic mustard season is coming soon.

B. Stewardship

No update

C. Wild About Lebanon

Chair Riley said there will be a Wild About Lebanon on April 22, 2024 at 4:00pm at the Wheatley Trailhead on Star Hill Conservation Land.

D. Amphibian Crossings

Chair Riley said the amphibians are on the move.

E. LUCT/Current Use

No update

F. Other Subcommittees

Mr. Hill said the City Council site visit for the Trues Brook Road Bridge project will be Wednesday, April 17 at 5:30pm.

A MOTION was made by Erling Heistad to extend the meeting to 9:15pm. The Motion was seconded by Brandon Hill.

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

7. OTHER BUSINESS

A. FYIs

Chair Riley said Pike Industries and their consultants has asked if there are any “shovel-ready” mitigation projects that can be used for wetland mitigation for the scaled back version of their impacts. Mr. Goodwin said there is no list of projects. He said the advice given to project managers when wetland mitigation is needed is to scale back on the impacts to wetlands on the given project, as opposed to searching for other mitigation projects.

B. Follow Ups

None

C. Workshops and Educational Opportunities

Chair Riley announced there will be a Route 120 Corridor Study meeting on April 24 at 5:00pm at DHMC in Auditorium E (3rd Floor), which will include a public charrette. She said she would forward the invitation to the Commission members and asked any available members to attend if they can.

Chair Riley reminded the group that Implicit Bias training is mandatory for all Commission members. She said the sessions, which will be held on April 15 and 16, will not be recorded.

Dr. Oidtmann said a Mascoma River Cleanup is planned for July 27, 2024.

8. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Paula Roux
Recording Secretary