

FINAL

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

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Bruce James (Vice Chair), Chris Johnson, Sean Dittrich (Alt.)

STAFF PRESENT: Mark Goodwin (GIS Coordinator)

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Riley called the meeting to order at 6:40pm. Mr. Goodwin reviewed the City's meeting in-person and REMOTE attendance policies and procedures.

Recording Secretary Paula Roux noted that Ms. Cinda Mersel will be taking over as Recording Secretary for the Conservation Commission meetings going forward.

At 6:41pm, Chair Riley approved the appointment of Mr. Hill to sit in for Vice Chair Bruce James and Ms. Almy to sit in for Mr. Johnson.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES May 09, 2024

A MOTION was made Don Lacey by to approve the April 11, 2024, Meeting Minutes as amended. The Motion was seconded by Susan Almy.

Amendments:

Page 2, Line 10: Change to "Ticknor"

Page 2, Line 12: Change to "Lebrun"

Page 2&3: Change all "Barrow" references to "Barros"

Page 3, Line 7: Delete "as they can"

Page 10, Line 16: Change to "mug wort"

Page 10, Line 18: Change "Upper Valley Land Trust presentation" to "UV Birders post"

Page 10, Line 42: Change to "Lakeside"

Page 11, Line 15: Change "Trai" to "Trail"

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

3. OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

No one from the public spoke.

4. PERMIT REVIEW – None

5. STUDY ITEMS – None

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Biodiversity Group (Invasives)

Mr. Lacey said he has been mowing Bakers Crossing and 2 Rivers. He said there is a lot of mug wort at 2 Rivers, and it does not seem like there are a lot of native plants growing there. He said he felt like 2 Rivers had a large flood plain area that might be ideal for a large-scale restoration plan or project.

The group discussed at length the need to gather a team of people to research and identify possible grant opportunities, and other ways to research and identify grant opportunities. Ms. Hirai suggested that they determine a trail management plan and a list of projects before a lot of work goes into grant writing.

The team discussed the previous grant proposal for the bridge over Great Brook. Mr. Goodwin said the state, which was the provider of the grant funds, has required that the project team use materials that are “USA-certified,” but have not clearly defined what that means. He said the funds will not be awarded until that designation is clarified, so the grant funding is on hold and, therefore, the project is on hold. Mr. Goodwin said he has consulted City Engineers about the status but was told the effort has stalled. Mr. Hill said he would talk to Mr. James to see if that can jump start the effort again.

The group discussed making trails ADA accessible. Ms. Hirai noted that one of the stewards had worked on accessible trails before becoming a steward in Lebanon. Mr. Hill said the City has a copy a federal document from the U.S. Forest Service, which can be used as a guideline. Ms. Hirai discussed the possibility of the Alana Cole trail being made accessible and noted a very muddy area near the parking lot that would need repair. There is a new owner of the MacNeil property. Chair Riley suggested this project idea be put on hold for now until grant opportunities can be found.

Chair Riley gave an overview of the Forest For The Trees workshop series that concluded in May. We attended a site walk that Hartford’s Conservation Commission and County Forester led through the Hartford Town forest.

B. Stewardship

Ms. Hirai said the group of volunteers from Hypertherm cleared the area between the two mitigation areas at 2 Rivers. She said the connector trail is now cleared, and Mr. Lacey can mow it to maintain it. She said it was a successful volunteer activity. She said in the future they need to think about a trail system with signage, so people do not get lost on the trails. Mr. Hill reported on the project at Boston Lot on which he worked with Hypertherm volunteers. He said

the project involved placing board bridges over very muddy areas and buckthorn clearing. Ms. Hirai said another Hypertherm volunteer group went to Honeysuckle Loop to pull honeysuckle.

Mr. Hill said he has been assisting Ranger John Tietjen as a second Ranger. He said they have been installing the signs created by Ranger John in Boston Lot and the old signs will be given as gifts to volunteers. Mr. Hill said there are two topographical signs in Boston Lot that need either to be repaired or replaced, and he said he and Ranger John are discussion options. The group discussed possible locations for signs in several conservation trail areas.

Mr. Hill said a large tree had fallen and crushed the picnic tables on Boston Lot. The picnic tables are at the Mill Parcel. He said he cleared the tree, so the area is passable, but the tables need to be repaired or removed. Mr. Hill also said there is part of a foundation and stairs that people have used to build fires. He said there appears to be a shelter that has been built in this area as well.

Chair Riley reported that the crop of blueberries at Jackson Conservation Area is abundant and great for picking. She encouraged the volunteers who had helped prune the bushes earlier this year to go and pick the blueberries.

Ms. Hirai talked about having volunteers work on apple trees that need a lot of attention at Signal Hill this fall. The group discussed strategies for pulling invasives in large areas, and whether the use of herbicides / pesticides was a good option.

Mr. Lacey said that Eagle Scout Aiden Rafter replaced one of the existing four bat boxes at Baker's Crossing and put two additional bat boxes up at new locations along the riverside of the DPW mowed right of way. The three other previously existing bat boxes were left in place including one that would have been very dangerous to replace because it is located on a stag that is constantly dropping. Ms. Hirai asked for a map of the locations where Mr. Rafter had installed the bat houses.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

A. FYIs

Chair Riley said the City is sending out a survey, asking residents what they would like to see happen with the lower parking lot behind City Hall. She encouraged members to complete the survey to share their visions for the area.

A. Follow Ups

Chair Riley said the City Council held a public hearing in July regarding the possible amendments to Zoning Ordinance Section 214. She noted that Section 214 states that City projects are subject to zoning requirements and the proposal was to exempt the City projects from zoning by default. She said the proposed amendment failed to have a motion at the meeting and did not move forward.

Chair Riley said that DES has requested more information on the City of Lebanon's cottage project application at 0 Barros Street. She said she thought some of their concerns, namely that a site plan was not submitted for evaluation before the Conservation Commission was asked to give its comments, were also raised by DES. She noted that site visits for this project and the proposed residential property project at the former Densmore Brickyard have been planned. She encouraged Commission members to attend. The group briefly discussed the possible wetlands impacts for the Densmore Brickyard project.

Mr. Lacey pointed out that since Robert Baker had mowed a trail for the snowmobile trail through Baker's Crossing and that since he had done that, we should take advantage of this action to make some use of the upper plateau. Following up on Mark Goodwin's request, I mowed a trail around the upper plateau this Summer, adding to the trail system at Baker's Crossing. Mr. Lacey also stated that Ms. Hirai had asked for a map of where all the City bat boxes are located.

Ms. Hirai noted that, in other meetings she has attended, draft motions are written prior to meetings and are provided to the Committee members. She said it is a good way to have clear and complete motions read into the record and is much more efficient than the method that the Conservation Commission currently uses, which is trying to compose the motions on the spot while the meeting is going on.

Mr. Goodwin explained that City Staff composes motions for some committees, like the Planning Board, because the details are available through the application documents that have been submitted. Chair Riley said she feels the Conservation Commission does a great job making comments to DES or NH Association of Conservation Commission, but she said she feels they are not as successful making comments to the Zoning Board. Mr. Goodwin suggested this could be a future agenda item.

C. Workshops and Educational Opportunities

None

8. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Trail System at 2 Rivers

9. ADJOURNMENT

A MOTION was made by Brandon Hill to adjourn the meeting to 8:59pm. The Motion was seconded by Erling Heistad.

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:59pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Paula Roux
Recording Secretary