

FINAL

**LEBANON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Remote Via Microsoft Teams
[LebanonNH.gov/Live](https://lebanonnh.gov/live)
November 14, 2024
6:30 PM**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sarah Riley (Chair), Bruce James, (Vice Chair), Erling Heistad, Barbara Hirai, Donald Lacey, Ernst Oidtman

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

STAFF PRESENT: Mark Goodwin (GIS Coordinator), Crystal Taplin (remote), Nathan Reichert (remote – approximately 30 minutes)

1. CALL TO ORDER – Chair Riley called the meeting to order at 6:35PM

Councilor Heistad arrived at 7:15pm.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. Donald Lacey MOVED to approve October 10, 2024, Minutes as amended. The motion was Seconded by Mr. Oidtman.

Amendments:

Page 2, line 29 change to Cormen Nature Preserve
Page 2, line 32, change to Rix Ledges and throughout document
Page 3, line 4, Hirai – and throughout document
Page 4, line 7 – change to Ms. Hirai
Page 4, line 17 – New Hampshire Fish and Game
Page 4, line - delete entire sentence
Page 4, Line 27 – strike entire sentence
Page 5, line 36, change to Ms. Hirai (from Almy)
Page 5, lines 49 and 52 should be Ms. Hirai

**** The MOTION was approved (5-0)***

3. OPEN TO PUBLIC: Mr. Dan Nash, a member of the public, sat in at this meeting.

A. No one from the public spoke.

4. PERMIT REVIEW:

A. None

5. STUDY ITEMS:

A. Zoning Amendments Review and Discussion

These will be discussed in the December 12, 2024, Conservation Commission meeting.

Chair Riley commented that she recalled Nate said some of the zoning amendments in the plan will affect the Conservation Commission and that this Commission does not have the opportunity to review these amendments that impact development *in advance*, nor can they make the complementary comments and recommendations that would add protection.

Chair Riley will forward the information from the October City Council meeting to Con Com members, pertaining to relevant Zoning information. Ms. Taplin (remote) said that they are waiting for a legal review of everything. Thereafter, the Conservation Commission will get a more detailed document from Zoning.

B. Discussion RE: Northern Lebanon Community Plan (NLCP)

The Conservation Commission has two roles in this matter, one to provide their comments and two, to make action items that might results in Zoning changes.

Mr. Goodwin initiated this conversation and shared a DRAFT of Next Steps (in green) he prepared, that the ConCom worked from during this meeting, with their focus on the next steps. The document is in response to the Strategic Goals and Recommendations (1.1 through 1.9) offered last month in the Northern Lebanon Community Plan (NLCP) and sent to ConCom. He also displayed a map for the Con Com to reference during their discussion. This Conservation Commission also agreed that the Study casts a wide net and so it will be important to prioritize the things that are most important.

Recommendation 1.1

Formalize and map a 100-ft. wide Wildlife Corridor Passage Overlay District that connects the three existing wildlife corridors and required the installation of signage at all existing and new multi-use path and roadway crossings that bisect the overlay district boundary.

Mr. Goodwin wrote:

Next Step: “Unsure as to “formalize” and Map 100’ Wildlife Corridor Passage and Overlay District. The corridor from the Landmark Lands, across Mr. Support Road and Route 120, to the Nicole Corman Nature Preserve, is encumbered land. There are opportunities to enhance the width of the corridor by expanding to land on one or two parcels, and that could be accomplished either by landowner outreach and a conservation proposal or could be part of a Planning Board site plan approval process.”

“The location of signage where the multi-use path could be a way to showcase the corridor if deemed worthy? The location of signage where roadways intersect are likely better served to align previous recommendations, including the concept of alerting vehicles well in advance of the corridor.”

Recommendation 1.2 Study the feasibility of decreasing traffic speeds and upsizing the existing culverts for all three existing wildlife corridors within the Study Area.

Next Step: Existing Speed limits are adequate and unlikely to be lowered with the volume of traffic served. Enforcement of existing speed limits is likely the more relevant action. Understanding what

enforcement measures are already in place and collaborating with the Lebanon Police as to suggesting additional enforcement measures could be beneficial, such as flashing speed signs, etc.

Culvert upsizing opportunities are limited to four or five locations in total occurring on Mt. Support, Route 120, and Etna Road, with the best candidate existing along route 120.” Con Com/ “CoL staff should share the recommendations with the NH DOT contact.” Mark will add additional verbiage here regarding DOT...Culvert Database and will talk with Rebecca about this as well.

Recommendation 1.3 In partnership with the Lebanon Conservation Commission and the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, develop public-facing education materials on the importance of the wildlife corridors and make them available at key City facilities.

Next Step: “Likely simply added to the list of topics that ConCom/CoL pushes out as part of the public educational messaging.”

Recommendation 1.4 If a parcel of developable land borders conservation lands, consider requiring a 100-foot, wooded or landscaped buffer between the property line and any new development to maintain a natural buffered area between existing preserved lands and any new developments.

Next Step: “Would a broad reaching zoning requirement as such have more unintended consequences than desired ones? Would defaulting to the Planning Board development review process, including conditioning approvals to include an appropriate distanced buffer when deemed necessary to avoid adverse impacts to the corridor be a better technique?”

There are already multiple examples of this in play and planners and the Planning Board need to continue to look for enhancements as opportunities present themselves and possibly additional buffers. These concepts are for the Planning Board, not the Conservation Commission.

Recommendation 1.5 Install signed and directional trailheads throughout the Study Area to promote the use of the extensive network of trails through existing conservation lands in and around the Study Area.

Next Step: “None. The Lebanon Conservation Commission reviewed this proposed action and did not see its association with the goals to preserve the ecological integrity of the area.”

Further, this recommendation could conflict with the goals of this Conservation Committee.

Ms. Hirai said that careful planning is needed to protect the ecological integrity. Chair Riley suggested they have a Trails for People and Wildlife workshop for the Planning Board, ConCom, Department of Recreation, the public, and all parties involved, so that all understand what is at stake, and the impacts of trails on these spaces.

Signage is important, but more signage is a separate issue from the possibility of adding more trails. This recommendation is not relevant to more trailheads, which should be a well thought out process and fall under the second Strategic Goal.

Recommendation 1.6 Mandate a percentage of new developments require dedicated public open space in the form of a landscaped plaza, pocket park, or a community garden, or natural areas.

Next Step: “see previous note regarding PB process and conditioning of development approvals.” This is another area that needs Planning Board approval, and it seems this mandate has a very broad in scope.

Recommendation 1.7 Approach DHMC regarding their three parcel assemblages north of LeHaye Drive (Parcel IDs 10-23, 10-24-200, and 10-25 for a total of approximately 9 acres) to gauge their willingness to dedicate the land to the City for the purposes of creating a community park, inclusive of amenities and programming of appropriate scale and size to reflect the land's existing natural features. Parking would not be part of this area.

Next Step: "ConCom recommends that if this concept was to be pursued, the cleared area has potential, but the existing forest and wetland area should remain in a natural state, and that parking should not be a component of the proposal. Invasive species removal should be pursued as part of any initiative.

Recommendation 1.8 Require that any future development within 250-feet of wetlands include a certain percentage of total site land cover as permeable surfaces.

Next Step: Explore additional buffers for existing wetlands within the study area.

Chair Riley shared that she thinks there should be a maximum permeable space rather than a percentage. Also, regarding proximity to wetlands, this is an opportunity to have natural vegetation around these wetlands. The recommendation as stated is much too broad, as it involves most of the City. Also, all wetlands need a buffer, so the ConCom would like to take this opportunity to explore additional buffers for existing wetlands, as stated above (in green).

Recommendation 1.9 Expand the coverage area of the Steep Slopes District to cover the entirety of the Study Area where slopes are greater than or equal to 25-percent are located to preserve the natural character of neighboring conservation lands, ridgelines, and rock formations.

Next Step: Additional analysis to determine whether any of the steep slopes are outside of what is already encumbered land, and if so, do they want to warrant zoning protection?"

Chair Riley added some comments on Strategy 2, Connectivity Improvements (sidewalks, multi-use paths, etc.), that she wants to be sure Planning understands the responsibilities of Conservation Commissions and the fact that the Conservation Commission needs to get information in advance, and included early in these processes, so that they can consider the impact on wetlands in advance of a project being completed, not after the fact. This strategy calls for more trail connections, and hence this request.

Also, this study goes all the way to the Hanover border, and she does not know how these changes correlate or impact Hanover's conservation?

Mr. James suggested they have conversations with Hanover. Ms. Riley asked how these different zones impact the natural resources in the subject parcels.

It is the same land in play, but different uses, and therefore different impacts as well. They need to learn more about these impacts, for example residential versus light industrial.

C. Status Update & Review – 2024 Con Com Goals

Under property stewardship, they have made substantial progress on Boston Lot, which was a 2024 focus for them. Ms. Hirai asked that the discussion of the Goodwin Conservation Area bridge be put off to a later date.

Regarding the Alana Cole trail, no progress has been made. Ms. Hirai and Chair Riley borrowed tools from the Upper Valley Trails Alliance (UVTA) Tool Lending Library for the last workday at Two Rivers

Conservation Area. The UVTA is a local resource that the Commission should consider using for expertise, consultation and for tools. The UVTA was asked to advise on the Alana Cole concept.

Chair Riley suggested they go look at the *accessible* trails Distant Hills in Walpole, New Hampshire. There has been much work done there to make trails accessible and safe. Power wheelchair users can use these trails. She thinks it would be worthwhile for Con Com members to see this.

Two River Conservation Area was cleaned up by Hypertherm on three separate days.

Ms. Hirai asked that they calculate the hours that volunteers and members have contributed in 2024. So far, they have counted more than 300 hours so far this year, not counting individual contributions, paid rangers, etc. They will get these numbers to Chair Riley so that she can include this in her 2024 spreadsheet.

They will continue the discussion of 2024 Con Com Goals/Results at the December 12, 2024, meeting.

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS: None

7. OTHER BUSINESS: None

8. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: None

9. ADJOURNMENT:

***The meeting was adjourned at 9:00PM by Chair Riley.**

Respectfully submitted,
Cinda Mersel
Recording Secretary