

FINAL

**LEBANON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Remote Via Microsoft Teams
LebanonNH.gov/Live
January 9, 2025
6:30 PM**

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

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

STAFF PRESENT: Mark Goodwin (GIS Coordinator)

1. CALL TO ORDER: Chair Riley called the meeting to order at 6:36 PM.

2. ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

A. Chair and Vice Chair

The first order of business was nominating officers. Mr. Goodwin asked for any nominations for Chair.

***Mr. Erling Heistad MOVED to nominate Ms. Sarah Riley for the position of Chair.
Seconded by Mr. Ernst Oidtmann.***

Mr. Goodwin then asked if there were any other nominations for Chair. There were none.

****The vote on the MOTION was approved unanimously***

Mr. Goodwin next asked for any nominations for Vice Chair.

***Ms. Sarah Riley MOVED to nominate Mr. Bruce James for the position of Vice Chair.
Seconded by Mr. Ernst Oidtmann.***

Mr. Goodwin then asked if there were any other nominations for Vice Chair. There were none.

****The vote on the MOTION was approved unanimously***

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

***Mr. Donald Lacey MOVED to approve December 12, 2024 Minutes as amended. The motion was
Seconded by Ernst Oidtmann.***

Amendments:

Page 1, Header correct spelling of Conservation (add an a)

Page 2, line 28, change effects to affects

Page 5, line 33 change to “expressed concern regarding some of the natural areas including two vernal pools.”

Page 6, lines 9-11, “Due to the affect of increased intensity of use on the adjacent natural area.”

Mr. Lacey commented on the clarity of the minutes.

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

4. OPEN TO PUBLIC: None

5. PERMIT REVIEW: None

6. STUDY ITEMS:

A. Status Update & Review – 2024 Con Com Goals (90 minutes)

Mr. Goodwin opened with saying there is no longer any money in the Conservation Commission (operations) funds, not to be confused with the Lost Fund. There is typically about \$12,500 in this operations fund, which consists of several line items, such as the ranger, fees for classes, OPS/mowing, etc. During this Council’s recent budget review, and subsequent meetings, the entire remaining balance was cut and was applied to building inspections.

The Lost Fund has a balance of approximately \$1,371,000 and generated approximately \$23,000 in 2024 (4% interest approximate rate). This Commission will still have the ability to operate, but from a different source.

Mr. Goodwin explained the new process. If any commission member needs funds, they let Mr. Goodwin know, preferably in advance. He will then request that money be deposited from the Lost Fund into their current operating account, so that the funds are there when needed. For example, Mr. Lacey wants to attend an upcoming educational conference, and Mr. Goodwin explained the process, which should take only a matter of days. Mr. Lacey will contact Mr. Goodwin requesting the needed funds. Mr. Goodwin will request these funds be deposited from the Lost Funds into the operating account.

It was noted the importance of ensuring that *no money* is left in the Conservation Commission operating account at year end, as they will lose it.

Mr. Goodwin also thinks there is an opportunity for them to review the Lost Funds, with the trustees, to see what other investment options there are. This Commission also needs to establish a schedule to review this such as quarterly. Chair Riley will initiate communication with the trustees.

Next, they reviewed the 2024 Goals, and what they want their 2025 Goals to be. Mr. Goodwin suggested a high-level discussion of the four categories which are:

Property Stewardship
Education/Outreach
Land Conservation
Miscellaneous

Note: The four goals above as well as the bullets and tildes under them were not discussed in the order they are written. Therefore, these meeting notes for Goals 2025 align with the flow of the discussion.

Mr. Goodwin started with **Land Conservation**. He asked what they would like to do with land conservation. In the last decade, their focus pivoted from purchasing land to helping landowners with expenses related to conservation easements.

Mr. Goodwin thinks there are some opportunities in the southeast part of the City. He encouraged them to put potential locations on the table, so that they can be reviewed by this Commission. He said if they have any projects or pieces of land in mind, they need to put together an application to the ARM fund or reach out to the property owner to offer to pay for the easement (e.g. \$20,000).

The first bullet under **Land Conservation** “Add to the conservation portfolio of conservation land within the City of Lebanon” will remain unchanged, and they will add at least the following two locations for conservation consideration – “the mouth of the Mascoma” and a property owned by Alice Peck Day on Starr Hill (currently under consideration for rezoning).

The Conservation Commission will have further discussions to explore other conservation opportunities in 2025. They will utilize maps showing all the known wildlife corridors and the SEAs.

The other six bullets under **Land Conservation** will remain as Goals in 2025.

Chair Riley also cited their opportunity to educate the public about beaver ponds and the importance to the ecological system.

There was a discussion about possibly doing another landowner outreach letter, letting them know that the Conservation Commission could help landowners with the process of conserving their land via conservation easements. This had been done several years ago (circa 2019) , with limited response but they think if the letter is reworded and clarifies the assistance and expertise the Conservation Commission can offer, it might get more traction.

A discussion ensued of other ways to get the word out about their work of land conservation. In addition to rewording this letter as well as their message, they will expand their audience by utilizing The Lebanon News, List Serves, and a Letter to the Editor of The Valley News, among others. They will also increase awareness of a recent publication [Conserving Your Land Options for New Hampshire Homeowners](#), published by the New Hampshire Land Trust Coalition, as well as videos on this topic.

Mr. Lacey noted that personal interactions work very well; the Conservation Commission will employ both methods.

Next, they discussed **Education/Outreach**.

Mr. Goodwin described this as the Conservation Commission generating material to educate the public. This is a broad topic, and it is one of the primary roles of this Commission.

“Wild About Lebanon”(bullet four) will remain a priority on their 2025 Goals. This can be easy walks in the winter, and walks along bodies of water, among other things. Informing the public about events such as salamander crossings (with maps) does not require much effort. Brett Theilen with the Harris Center in Hancock, New Hampshire is a resource. The Harris Center has an incredibly successful crossing program. Laura Sokolosky is another local person that is interested in crossings, and she is active on Pine Tree Cemetery Road. Hartford has a successful program as well. Sarah has the capacity to continue with what she currently does, that being continuing to raise awareness.

It was agreed that messaging about simply staying off the road on key nights could help the local amphibian crossings. They will make maps available as well. This could have the greatest impact. Closing some roads could be a future consideration.

Hosting Mascoma River clean-up (6th bullet) will be changed to read bi-annual and will be on their 2026 Goals since they just completed a huge cleanup in 2024.

They discussed the River Keeper position (bullet seven), and the Mascoma River local area committee. Lebanon has one representative on the LAC, but it's important that other towns have volunteers as well.

Chair Riley suggested they conduct a short series of expert talks either at Kilton Library or City Chambers, utilizing a local expert, or a river ranger, coordinating with local schools or Dartmouth students.

Mr. Goodwin will add a bullet to the 2025 Goals to "explore water resource education and protection initiatives", and this topic will be an agenda item for early 2025. This will encompass the first three bullets along with the last bullet.

The eighth bullet will remain and be reworded to say, "Continued participation in the Upper Valley Forest Health Working Group".

They will add a bullet "Education and awareness about native and invasive species".

Property Stewardship

Mr. James stated the importance for this Commission to consider the human dimension as well as the environment, with all their work. They will access each of the properties, and decide on their highest priorities for each, so that their focus and accomplishments are aligned with both. This can help reduce barriers with the public and message that the Lebanon Conservation Commission is working with the community to increase public access in appropriate ways.

They will add a bullet to read "Continue to explore barriers to access conservation lands" and this will be their overarching goal under **Property Stewardship**.

They discussed keeping a separate bullet for Alana Cole for more accessibility but rewording it (delete ADA access) to consider adding nature stops and kiosks and brochures for this location.

The Conservation Commission will weigh in for all kiosks at each conservation area.

A bullet will also be added for Signal Hill to include having the trail mowed regularly, which will improve access there.

The other bullets will remain under **Property Stewardship**.

The Conservation Commission will publicize that the New Hampshire Fish & Game is asking for turkey counts between now through March. The Commission will publish this in The Lebanon News and will also encourage citizens to go directly to New Hampshire Fish & Game's online site, to learn more.

Miscellaneous

The first bullet "Increased communication...: will be deleted.

The second bullet will be reworded to read : “Explore Lost Fund Investment Strategies”.

The third bullet “Collaboration Communication” will be deleted; it is too vague.

The ~ “Evaluate Lebanon participation...” will become a bullet and reworded “Continue to pursue participation in the New Hampshire Fish & Game doe harvest program.

The next ~ “Innovative stormwater...”will remain in the document.

The next ~ under this heading will read “Continue to stay involved with the Exit 18 redesign.”

The next tilde (~) will remain but will read “Incorporate aquatic organism passage and wildlife friendly designs into culvert replacement projects city-wide in line with New Hampshire Stream Crossing Initiative.” This will be in the strategic plan as well.

The last tilde ~ “Work with DPW...”will remain; it is important and requires help from the City. This too will be in the strategic plan.

7. COMMITTEE REPORTS: None

8. OTHER BUSINESS:

A. FYIs

Taking Action for Wildlife Series

B. Follow Up

There will be a Special Meeting of the Lebanon Conservation Commission on January 27th (Monday) at 5:30PM to prepare concise statements on the three proposed zoning amendments that will be placed on the March ballot.

The Conservation Commission will have three agenda items to present to the City Council. The first agenda item will provide a concise statement for the City Council, with commentary on the four proposed zoning amendments.

The second item will be their communication to inform the Council with their input related to the current zoning amendment process. Chair Riley will provide the City Council with a brief summary of the Lebanon Conservation Commission’s document to the Planning Department.

The third will address the fact that the Conservation Commission did not have enough time to evaluate the zoning amendment proposed by Dan Nash.

Following is the introduction to the document that will be given to the Planning Department:

*The recommendations in the September 2024 draft **Northern Lebanon Community Plan** were reviewed by the Lebanon Conservation Commission during the October and November 2024 commission meetings, with a focus on the wildlife corridor- and natural resource-associated recommendations. This document captures the feedback from those discussions and will be submitted to the Planning Department in an effort to further the implementation of, or provide alternatives to, the plan’s recommendations.*

Chair Riley will provide the Conservation Commission with the summary for the Council as well as the full eight-page draft digitally and she asked that this Commission review and provide their feedback so that she and Ms. Harai can prepare their final document for the Planning Department.

Mr. Lacey *MOVED to extend the meeting until 9:15PM*
Seconded by Mr. Oidtmann

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

C. Workshops and Educational Opportunities

Taking Action for Wildlife webinar series is available for Conservation Commission members to watch it. Chair Riley recommended that members register for the topics that interest them.

Wild About Lebanon at Two Rivers will be either January 25th or February 1st.

January 17th at 10:00AM the tree Advisory Board will have a winter tree ID stroll with Liz McKinley. The location will be posted on the list serve.

9. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: None

10. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Erling Heistad *MOVED to adjourn the meeting.*
Seconded by Mr. Chris Johnson.

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

****The meeting was adjourned at 9:10PM by Chair Riley.***

Respectfully submitted,
Cinda Mersel
Recording Secretary