

FINAL

**LEBANON CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES  
Remote Via Microsoft Teams  
LebanonNH.gov/Live  
September 11, 2025  
5:30 PM**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Sarah Riley (Chair), Bruce James (Vice Chair), Susan Almy, (Alt.), Erling Heistad, Chris Johnson, Donald Lacey, Ernst Oidtmann

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Barbara Hirai

**STAFF PRESENT:** Mark Goodwin (GIS Coordinator)

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**1. CALL TO ORDER:**

**2. Living in Lebanon Focus Group Housing Discussion**

- A. Housing and Land Conservation Focus Group facilitated by Steve Whitman and Zak Brohinsky of Resilience Planning & Design (1 hour)

Mr. Steve Whitman (RPD) opened the meeting and introduced himself along with Mr. Brohinsky (RPD).

Following are the attendees that introduced themselves (aside from ConCom members listed above):

Ellen Hindor, Vital Communities, Jeannie McIntyre and Peg Merrens, Upper Valley Land Trust, Henry Bromberg, Lebanon Energy Advisory Committee, Brendon Gilmore, Saxon Partners, Russell Hirschler, Upper Valley Trails Alliance, Tim McNamara, City Council and Chair of the Housing Task Force, Ben Wallace, Nature Conservancy, New Hampshire, Lucas Dunford, Valley News, Maryann Peters, resident, Renee Thelan, Associate Planner, Upper Valley Lakes & Regional Planning Commission, Val Stinson, Enfield resident, Jonathan Chaffee, Lebanon Energy Advisory Committee, Amy Margolis, Lebanon Property Management

The City has received HOP (Housing Opportunity Planning funds) and has been working the past several months with the Lebanon Housing Task Force resulting in substantial Lebanon data thus far as well as several outreach initiatives, most recently as tonight's outreach at the Farmer's Market at Colburn Park. The goal is to form a new plan that will help inform the new housing chapter for Lebanon for the Master Plan that will actually guide policy and non-regulatory related initiatives over the coming decade and after.

Mr. Brohinsky spoke next and said a key consideration is how housing and conservation can work together.

Key data points and questions for discussion today:

- Sprawl versus infill development and understanding trends in development
- Shifting development of housing types in Lebanon (single housing represents only 6% of *current development* whereas 90% is 7 or more residential units, and 3% are 2-4 units).
- Even middle-income households are struggling to find options for housing in Lebanon
- New housing appears to be skewed towards higher income households
- If Lebanon were to house 25% of its projected 2034 population, it would need 872 new housing units, so they cannot all be single family homes on multi-acre lots
- What is the optimal housing mix, how do they work with builders to accomplish this, and how does Lebanon align Conservation goals and balance affordability?

1-What makes the City of Lebanon distinct and special?

2- How would you describe the current housing situation in Lebanon?

3- In what ways is housing, such as availability, types, or costs impacting you or other community members that you are aware of?

4- What solutions or opportunities do you see related to housing, worth pursuing in Lebanon?

Where should the City direct new housing in the City?

What types of housing do you think are needed most?

Are there ways for Housing and Conservation to work together?

Ms. Almy said that new housing going up to wildlife areas can be unfortunate for the wildlife. The more nature trails, the more problems. On a different topic, she also said that a resident of a condo unit gets twice the property tax per unit compared to other housing types.

Mr. Lacey said that the Conservation Commission needs to learn how to best work with Housing, to get the best results for all. It was agreed that the willingness to come to the table is promising.

One audience member said that she and others are already having difficulty getting doctors and medical care and wondered what this will look like as Lebanon continues to grow.

Mr. McNamara clarified that when they refer to “infill”, they are referencing unutilized or underutilized parcels within the urban area, that are already serviced with water and sewer. He mentioned a current cottage development underway on Barrow Street.

Mr. Goodwin shared more background about policy documents and the current scenario where more housing is needed and there are competing demands. For example, he’s aware that there is a demand for the \$1M plus homes on larger lots, alongside the obvious need of increased volume of affordable housing for many.

Con Com members shared some history of Lebanon. One shared that he is aware that some people are selling their homes here, because they can no longer afford rising Lebanon taxes. Mr. Heistad shared a story of a family (the head of household is a plumber) he knows that lived here in Lebanon for their entire lives but have had to sell their home due to being unable to afford Lebanon taxes. One also stated that the number of school age children is low for the number of people living here.

Mr. Whitman shared some other meetings (like this one) that they will be having over the next few weeks. Their goal is to get a diversity of perspectives; all are welcome!

Chair Sarah Riley shared that there is a lot of opportunity for housing, that has no impact on conservation, but of course some does.

Mr. Oidtmann inquired if this Task Force is addressing the homeless. Mr. Nathan Reichert, Director, Planning & Development, offered that yes, they are included, and he refers to the Lebanon housing efforts as covering the homeless to the high end.

Mr. Ben Wallace, Nature Conservancy, NH (lives in New London), shared some observations. He sees another kind of “municipal siloing”, because Wilmot is having similar challenges. HOP grants go to the bigger towns, not to smaller towns like Wilmot. He posed the idea that Lebanon take up this challenge as well.

Mr. Bruce James, Vice Chair, asked about the hospital and the fact that much of their traveling staff is competing for places to rent. He wondered if anyone could share more information about Dartmouth Medical and how their housing demands impacts Lebanon overall. Mr. Reichert shared how lack of housing negatively impacts Dartmouth Medical, and their employee retention. Many of their employees are here for 2 to 3 years but then are forced to move out of the area, because there is not affordable housing for them to purchase.

Mr. Jonathan Chaffee, LEAC, shared some history that there used to be quite a few “rooming houses” for single people on fixed incomes. These are now coming back but on the higher end of the market. He thinks there is a role or place for this in Lebanon and could help address some of the homeless problem.

Ms. Almy said that we don’t just need housing for the homeless, we also need it for other low/lower wage earners, that help contribute to the quality of our lives. She also said that multi-family units are the most profitable for builders, which is why you see so much growth with these.

Mr. Chris Johnson, Conservation Commission, said that he wishes to see Lebanon consider **building up**, a lot more up, such as Lebanon Towers and higher, and posed the audience to imagine how many people that could house, while also conserving land.

Mr. Reichert shared that on a positive note Lebanon High School is #2 in the State of New Hampshire, and a Top 600 School in the United States. This contributes to Lebanon being a magnet of attracting new residents. He also commented about the excellent body of work that Mr. Mark Goodwin has compiled about the City of Lebanon; it is current, useful, and timely.

Ms. Catherine Patch, a Lebanon resident and teacher in Lebanon (attending remotely) said she wanted to echo the idea of updating the zoning regulations, for shared housing, and she thinks Lebanon needs to increase the number of people that are allowed in housing units, when the people living in the property are unrelated. Ms. Almy said this is also New Hampshire legislature, and that the State taxes people with a meals and rooms tax if the tenant is living in the housing for under 6 months.

### **3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

A. June 12, 2025

**Ms. Almy MOVED to approve the June 12, 2025 Minutes as amended  
Seconded by Mr. Lacey**

***Amendments:***

Page 2, Line 5-6 (missing one word “had”) change sentence to:

The Conservation Commission and the Saxon team discussed many components of the wetland impacts and other impacts associated with the project.

Page 2, Line 48 replace He with Mr. Wilkes

Page 2, Lines 41-44 change to:

This project is proposing some limited wetland impact related to the two new stream crossings. Those crossings are at the narrowest points of the wetlands, but there will be edge impacts there. A 3<sup>rd</sup> wetland impact is proposed on Hanover St., to extend the sidewalk there, which was a condition of the planning board.

Page 2, Line 49 change to: Mr. Wilkes spelled out temporary and permanent impacts to the stream bank and stream bed , and they shared an impact chart with the Con Com (see Agenda packet).

Page 3, line 2 & 14 correct spelling of swell to swale

Page 5, line 37, add Mt Support Rd

Page 5, line 28, change loss to Lost

Page 5, Line 15, add HB124

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

B. June 12, 2025 Site Walk

***Mr. Lacey MOVED to approve the June 12, 2025 Site Walk Minutes as amended  
Seconded by Mr. Johnson***

Change Ms. Almy to Absent since she did not participate in this site walk.

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

4. **OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:** none
5. **PERMIT REVIEW:** none
6. **STUDY ITEMS**

A. Ranger Introduction (15 minutes)

Mr. Goodwin introduced Mr. Neal Montibello, who has been our Ranger (part time) the past two months. Mr. Montibello obtained his Bachelor’s degree in December 2024 from the University of Maine, with a focus on Forest Ecology. His prior work experience includes having worked for the Forrest Service in Oregon and a research position while obtaining his degree. He is local and currently lives in Hanover.

Some of his work thus far includes:

- Patrolling and monitoring the trails in Lebanon
- Trimming brush along trails and around kiosks, removing smaller trees/limbs with handsaw
- Updating sign inventory on field maps
- Installed three new trail bridges at Farnum south entrance, Goodwin ski jump entrance, and Burnt mountain trail near summit

- Completed weed whacking at several trail entrances, Jackson blueberries, Signal Hill Summit, Two Rivers, Baker's Crossing, etc.
- Blazing at Goodwin conservation area
- Ticknor: he has opened up the vernal pool trail
- Picked up garbage along trails and around kiosks (True's Ledges) and put up signage that it is illegal to dump garbage on these lands
- Enforcing camping regulations at Boston Lot
- Clearing and maintaining drainages/water bars (Boston Lot gravel road)
- Assessing trail layout for rerouting/better signage/trail map updates where necessary
- Put up string at True's Ledges in front of steep cliffs
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Work he will be starting:

- Continue with all tasked he has started and identify other necessary maintenance
- Remove larger downed trees with chain saw
- Picnic tables: build or buy pre-made for Boston Lot and Mill Parcel
- Install steep cliff signs at True's Ledges
- Ticknor: finish work on opening vernal pool trail, install signage
- Reroute trails/update maps/signs: Two Rivers, Burnt Mountain Summit area, Jackson, Signal Hill and possibly others
- Boundary marking
- Continue updating blazes
- Sweep drainages after leaves fall
- Outreach ideas include Trail of the Month, Guided Ranger Walks, etc.

Mr. Oidtmann noticed some of the work that Neal has completed and thanked him. Mr. Oidtmann offered his help along Farnum Hill, near where he lives. He also commented about the trails of Burnt Mountain Summit area and asked Mr. Montibello if he could come up with signage that more clearly defines directions there. Mr. Montibello, he agreed to do this.

Mr. Montibello currently has ID he carries (for his Ranger role), Mr. Goodwin plans for the City to also get him a jacket and shirts that says "Ranger" so that he is more readily distinguishable by the public.

- B. Conceptual Review for Planning Board application: **SPNH Mount Support, LLC, Mount Support Road (Tax Map 24, Lot 1, Plot 100), zoned R-1 & R-3**: Applicant requests conceptual review per Section 4.3 B of the Site Plan Review Regulations of a proposed 260-unit residential development consisting of three (3) 4-story multi-family dwellings. **PB2025-42-CON** (30 minutes)

Mr. Brendan Gilmore represented Saxon Partners at the meeting.

Ms. Riley said that Con Com now has the opportunity to comment to the Planning Board, with a focus on the natural resources. Mr. Goodwin said the main objective is to raise the attention of the Planning Board to things they might not be aware of. He asked Mr. Gilmore about the wall height. Mr. Gilmore said that the wall height at the entrance will be approximately 30' tall. He also stated that blasting will be required. They will have a full-time Geo technical engineer on site throughout this project.

Ms. Riley said they can point out that this project will impact at least 12,623 square feet of wetlands, which is big, regardless if they are “low value”. She also said it would be important to let the Planning Board know that Con Com had a site walk, and that they encourage the Planning Board to do the same, though the appearance/water changes throughout the year, and so they might not experience hearing running water beneath their feet, like Con Com did in April.

Mr. James (Vice Chair) still suggests this project not move forward as he stated and wrote for April’s Con Com meeting ( see attachment). First, he sees a hillside, and this project is proposing to build one property basically “on top of” the other, up the hill. Additionally, there will be an additional AOT, and to him, this presents a lot of unpredictable impacts. Therefore, he also recommends that the DES complete a site walk.

Mr. Gilmore said that they had a site walk about three weeks ago with DES and VHB; they have not yet received an official response.

Mr. James used the phrase “designing with nature not against nature”, with the goal of trying to make the project fit with minimal impacts. What he has seen is a dramatic disturbance of the natural watershed. For example, can it fit into the contour of the land with minimal change and minimal impact on hydrology.

Ms. Riley said that if this project moves forward, that the project team reconsider many things since she still thinks this project is too large for the buildable space. The solution could be a smaller project, taking into account the wetlands. If this project moves forward, she ask that the Planning Board and the project team reevaluate building size, parking lot size, driveway length, etc.

Ms. Almy discussed some history of Lebanon and the flooding that took place with Hurricane Irene (downgraded to a windstorm). The City lost 4 units of a 15-unit building, and they lost the entrance to Slayton Hill Rd. She lives on Poverty Lane and said that they had so much water between March and July that there was 6” pools of water in front of many of the houses there. And now, the same area is in danger of fires, due to the current draught. These types of events are likely to increase in the future, causing conditions to vary extremely.

***Mr. Heistad MOVED to have the following comments be submitted to the Planning Board (PB) as part of the conceptual review:  
Secoded by Mr. Johnson***

The ConCom held a site walk in April 2025 and strongly encourages the PB to hold a site walk, but to be aware that current conditions are quite dry in comparison to other times of the year. During the ConCom site walk, the full extent of the hydrology was prevalent, including flowing intermittent streams, ponding, and sheet flow, and subsurface flow was heard. These wet areas extended beyond the delineated wetlands.

- The proposal is essentially placing new buildings up above an existing building. This project will need a retaining wall estimated to be 30” high.
- The degree of blasting that will be required is evidence of inappropriate site location and project design
- The two AOT permits (one for the first phase and a new one will be required for this project) being required are testament of asking too much of this site

- There are Steep slope concerns. This project is a good example of where slope restrictions, as called for in the Route 120 study, should be expanded
- We have concerns with the timing of the AOT approval, including the AOT being conditioned as opposed to required up front
- The amount of wetland impact is significant with permanent impacts in excess of 12k sq. ft.
- Attention should be paid to DES Wetland Bureau comments and/or Requests for More Information related to the wetland permit application, as well as information provided to DES from the applicant
- Projects of this scale and type should have dedicated open space areas, such as dog parks, community gardens, landscape plazas, or pocket parks to minimize the impacts on adjacent natural areas and water resources.
- The remaining acreage should be permanently protected, as proposed by the applicant

Solutions or alternative options could include a design with less impact, to include a decrease in building size, parking lot size, driveway configuration, as well as the overall design.

The Planning Board should be asking the question as to whether blasting hillsides and filling wetlands for housing projects is what Lebanon should be doing.

On a related note: The Conservation Commission would ask that the Planning Board support the concept that AOT permit applications be sent to ConCom (and PB) as part of the default process. Additionally, Mr. Bruce James' April 2025 memo is being submitted as part of this document (also in Conservation Commission April 10, 2025 Minutes).

***\*The vote on the MOTION was approved (6-0).***

C. 2026 Con Com Budget (30 minutes)

It was agreed Con Com will continue to fund Mr. Montibello's salary, as well as sufficient funds to add picnic tables to the sites mentioned earlier in today's meeting.

***Mr. Heistad MOVED to approve a budget of \$5,000 be allocated.  
Seconded by Mr. Lacey***

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

Mr. Goodwin said that the City is asking for Con Com provide their 2026 budget number. It was agreed that Con Com will allocate their 2026 budget to be the same amount as 2025. All their budget money will continue to come from the Lost Fund.

***Mr. Lacey MOVED to approve this.  
Seconded by Mr. Johnson***

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

## **7. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

- A. Biodiversity Group (Invasive)
- B. Stewardship

- Ranger
- Trail Coordinator
- Monitors and Stewards

Mr. Lacey said that recently he and Vergis repaired a damaged picnic table.

- C. Wild about Lebanon
- D. Amphibian Crossings
- E. LUCT/Current Use
- F. Other Subcommittees

## **8. OTHER BUSINESS**

- A. FYIs
- B. Mr. Oidtmann shared that on the Aspen Wall Trail, there were several trees down on the south point and on another nearby trail. He took care of these, but his equipment was damaged in the process.

Mr. Lacey said that an organization, Red Bird Consulting(project lead by Sue Cobb and Jennifer Reardon) is going to attempt to do some transplanting of some rare plants near the top of Mt. Support Rd. on September 20<sup>th</sup> at around 9:00AM. Mr. Lacey is going to be there to help them identify plants. Mr. Lacey said that he was told by them that the land is rocky, and they think the project is in all likelihood undoable.

Ms. Almy stated that the second largest and most important wetland in Lebanon, Martin Brook Headwaters, is totally dried up right now.

- C. Follow Up
- D. Workshops and Educational Opportunities

The **Annual Conference is Saturday, November 1, 2025**, and registration is already open. It will be at Pembroke again. Ms. Riley also sent Con Com members information on other upcoming opportunities, one coming up as early as tomorrow. It will be a series of webinars and lunch and learns on how to use the DES applications. She noted that one upcoming lunch & learn is about waste production.

## **9. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

## **10. ADJOURNMENT**

*Mr. Lacey **MOVED** for adjournment.*

*Seconded by Mr. Johnson*

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

**The meeting was adjourned at 8:58PM by Chair Riley.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Cinda Mersel  
Recording Secretary

\*This DRAFT was delayed due to the media not being available for this meeting for several days.

Attachment 1

Conservation Commission meeting April 10, 2025 , page 3 excerpt: attachment 1

**The Lebanon Conservation Commission recommends that the NH Department of Environmental Services (DES) not approve the following application:**

**Saxon Real Estate Partners, LLC, 0 Mount Support Rd (Tax Map 24, Lot 1, Plot 100) – Major Impact Application, for construction of a new 3-building, 4-story residential apartment complex with podium and surface parking, amenities, and landscape improvements that would include 106 SF of temporary impacts and 12,623 SF of permanent impacts CC2025-03 DES #2025-00567**

**The following reasoning is provided to support the recommendation for not granting approval:**

**Given that landscape alteration and an Alteration of Terrain (AOT) will be needed to develop this site on the Bernardston soils and in this wetland watershed complex, the plan as proposed with land alteration and building is ill-advised. There are too many unknown and possibly unpredictable, interactions on and off the Site between hydrology, soils, wetlands, and existing buildings downslope to proceed with this project as proposed. During the site visit water was observed flowing above and below the surface beyond the areas delineated on the wetland map. Additional shallow pools of standing water and ephemeral streams were observed within the proposed build of disturbed area that were not mapped.**

*Mr. Bruce James MOVED to have the Conservation Commission request DES not approve the application for this project. Con Com will provide the above statement to submit to DES.  
Seconded by Mr. Ernst Oidtmann*

*\*The MOTION was approved unanimously*