

FINAL

LEBANON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL
Remote Via Microsoft Teams
LebanonNH.gov/Live
January 8, 2026
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.)

STAFF PRESENT: Mark Goodwin (GIS Coordinator)

1. CALL TO ORDER:

A. Chair Riley called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM.

B. Nomination of Officers:

Conservation Commission **Chair and Vice Chair for 2026**

Mr. Erling Heistad MOVED to nominate Sarah Riley to continue as the Chair of the Conservation Commission through December 31, 2026.

Seconded by Ms. Barbara Hirai

**The MOTION was approved (6-0), 1 abstention (Riley)*

Mr. Donald Lacey MOVED to nominate Bruce James to continue as the Vice Chair of the Conservation Commission through December 31, 2026.

Seconded by Mr. Ernst Oidtmann

**The MOTION was approved (6-0), 1 abstention (James)*

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A. December 11, 2025

Vice Chair Bruce James MOVED to approve the minutes as amended

Seconded by Mr. Erling Heistad

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

Pg. 4, Lines 17&18, include in Motion wording

Pg. 4, Lines 22-25, number 3 sections of land

Pg. 4, Line 27, remove “and power lines”

Pg. 6, Lines 13&14, remove “the transition from fossil Fuels to electric vehicles”. Add the word deleterious before the word “impact”

Pg. 7, Change to Mr. Heistad for Motion and Seconded by Chair Riley

3. OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:

4. PERMIT REVIEW:

A. None

5. STUDY ITEMS:

A. Kleen Laundry River Restoration Project Discussion – Jon Livadas (30 minutes)

Mr. Jon Livadas started by thanking the Conservation Commission for their support of the ARM funding. While they applied for approximately \$450,000, they were awarded substantially less, in an amount of approximately \$250,000; they are waiting until the next meeting to see how they can “realize” that money. Much of that money will be spent along the riverbank at their property, and unfortunately, they will not be able to work on the nearby island. They will however be able to restore the riverbank, as well as remove a 10-foot mound of bricks along with many of the invasive species there.

They are also working with DES to apply for low interest loans, to start to remediate the office building and demolish that and get it off site, along with the building materials which contain PCBs . They also want to start working their way into the hillside where there is contamination from offsite and onsite.

He inquired if there are any other funds, grants, etc. as he continues to search for help with the horizontal site work and mostly remediation; he is open to working with anyone locally or nationally, that can help provide funds to assist in cleaning up this site.

Chair Riley said they were really excited about this project as presented in their October meeting by Chris Spaulding, and she is glad to hear that they are interested and actively looking for other sources of funds. She referenced a draft of Watershed Management Plan for Mascoma Lake, and there is a list of organizations that provide relevant grant opportunities for this kind of project. She mentioned 2, the Northeast Forest and River Fund (grants from \$50K to \$200K) for projects that restore and sustain healthy forests and rivers through habitat restoration, stream connectivity, etc. (perhaps the island part of this project would apply), and also the Five Star Urban Waters Restoration Grants program, which is a National Fish and Wildlife Federation program and could apply to erosion due to unstable streambanks or degraded shorelines caused by development. She will forward Mr. Livadas the Draft Management Plan so that he can see the full list of resources. The Conservation Commission also mentioned several other potential grant organizations in their October meeting, while reviewing this project.

She said that this is such a good project and could spread and reiterated that Con Com has funds to help with the conservation component and if the island is kept in the project, this is in the Conservation Commission’s wheelhouse. Mr. Livadas said that Con Com might have access to grants that his organization does not have.

He said that it is imperative that this island restoration work be completed in conjunction with the building project and that they cannot work their way back. Once they build the building and are in the riverbank, it’s never going to make a lot of sense again to drive excavators into the river again, because they would be disturbing all the work that they previously completed/spent money on.

He remains open to any ConCom ideas, and he will research the information Chair Riley is sending to him regarding other possible grants.

Mr. Goodwin asked if the ARM fund award allows for them to scale this project (e.g. this is what we had planned to do, you gave us X funds so we will decrease the effort to match what you have provided.). Mr. Livadas said that they will discuss this in their next meeting. He thinks there was some assumption by the ARM grant providers that Mr. Livadas' company, a for-profit, would use their funds for the land/island restoration work, which they cannot do, since all these funds are over and above what his firm had budgeted for this project. They are trying to find the right balance with this extremely expensive project, and it is exceedingly hard to fundraise for, given the current economic environment nationally. They plan to apply again next year for future funds, though they also let the grantors know that this cleanup for the island has a limited window of time when they will be excavating, and that timeframe will be the time to complete the island cleanup.

Mr. Livadas repeated his thanks to the Conservation Commission; he plans to meet with ConCom again and continue to keep them updated.

B. Status Update & Review – 2026 Con Com Goals (60 minutes)

Mr. Goodwin began by saying that they need to reassess and think of what their big interests are for the Conservation Commission for 2026. He shared a **DRAFT** outline of Goals for 2026 document (also in the Agenda Packet) on the room screen.

Chair Riley encouraged all attendees to speak freely. For the remainder of today's meeting, the following were discussed, with a focus on bullets/narrative in **green print**.

Property Stewardship

- **Forest Management Plans: review existing plans and access status of recommended action items; evaluate the need for additional management plans where none exist, and for non-forest lands, meadow lands (e.g. LeBron Meadows) (MP5.4b.2)**
- **Review trail maintenance infrastructure needs, e.g. footbridges, etc. (MP5.4b.2)**
- **Continued distribution & posting of signage/kiosks/map resources and include updating and/or refreshing existing Kiosks maps (MP 5.4b.2)**
- **Invasive species management ***
- **Continue to explore access opportunities to conservation properties, including:**
 - Goodwin Conservation Property bridge across Great Brook
 - Alana Cole ADA opportunities
 - Other ADA opportunities
 - Talk with the Upper Valley Trails Alliance to follow up about grant monies and get a free site visit; possible locations -Rail Trail to DPW Switchback Trail and/or connecting Pat Welch Park to the Northern Rail Trail.
- **Check if Hanover is hiring a Ranger and if so, possibly partner up with them**
- **Post opportunities for Stewards on all kiosks**

The current Ranger for Lebanon has applied to graduate school so in all likelihood will not be able to continue his role here. The position is still funded. Mr. Johnson posed that they could possibly find a Dartmouth student especially since the pace is flexible and he will work with the Outdoor Programs Office. It was noted by Mr. Heistad that this role will require some oversight.

Chair Riley shared that the Tree Advisory Board recently learned that they need to plant approximately 200 trees and complete a street inventory of all trees in Lebanon/West Lebanon. They might hire a contractor and this board will also be looking for volunteers, along with input on ideal spots for these trees.

Preference is for mostly native trees and trees that are known to do well in urban environments but no maples or ash. Chair Riley has a list of preferred trees such as honey locust, Kentucky coffee tree, hackberry, sycamore, some oaks, etc.

There was discussion about people signing up to help with property stewardship, but not all Con Com members are seeing the information on who has signed up. Also, Vice Chair James cited an example of having worked with 4-5 stewards who signed up and completed an orientation to a trail section with him, but then never have any of them have followed through, even though they showed great enthusiasm and energy. Disseminating the list(s) of people who have signed up along with a more stringent follow up could prove worthwhile for this important stewardship program. Chair James has taken on this responsibility of walking these areas almost daily and has completed and submitted Wikiloc Table Maps to Mr. Goodwin.

Mr. Lacey suggested they talk with people that they see regularly on these trails and that could be an obvious opportunity of potential stewards of specific areas. Mr. Goodwin said that they need to spread a wider net for finding volunteer stewards.

Mr. Goodwin said that ConCom has already budgeted \$10,120 for the 2026 ConCom fund, for the care of land, kiosks, etc., etc. Many cities the size of Lebanon and larger, have a person dedicated to open space planning. Mr. Goodwin wears many hats for the City of Lebanon, including his role as GIS Coordinator, overseeing 2,000 acres, among other things, and is happy to do so, but he also acknowledged that someone with more time could be beneficial to Lebanon, to focus on ConCom 2026 goals and expand their capacity. The question was posed should ConCom expand the usage of their LOST FUNDS to help with some of this work? Mr. Goodwin said the eyes and the ears that ConCom members already provide is invaluable. Mr. Johnson offered to help Mr. Goodwin with some of the deep development (for the maps/trails, adding Farnham Hill, Baker's Crossing, etc.).

*Mr. Goodwin, as staff liaison, said that there are 2 citizens willing to get herbicide education (Lynn Fisher and Eric no last name provided) and he showed the expenses involved (sans the equipment and chemicals, etc.) to get the licenses to apply these chemicals. The total is \$312 to cover filing applications, registrations for exams, core manual, NH specific manual, Category B study materials but potentially a total of \$1,000 to cover Commercial not for hire pesticide license,

ConCom agreed to allocate \$1,000 from the LOST FUND for the training and outfitting of the two volunteers. Mr. Goodwin said they will come back to this to decide the details of projects, when/where the work is to be done, etc., etc.

Mr. Goodwin said he will also check to see the costs involved to get some "trail counters" to see how many people are walking these trails (e.g. Lakeside Trail) . This will also inform ConCom where best spend their efforts on maintenance.

Mr. Heistad said that ConCom has the resources to do what he/others need to do to accomplish their goals, in addition to what they are already doing to assist with invasive species, conserve lands, and reporting their feedback to Mr. Goodwin/ConCom – being the boots on the ground as they walk these trails.

It was noted there can be other work done, that is not listed above.

Education/Outreach

- Explore Water Resource Education & Protection Initiatives

- Participation in the 2025 Mascoma Watershed Planning Study (the lakes watershed)
- Continued support for Wild About Lebanon (MP 5.6a.5) (SP5.7.1)
 - Explore having theme-based outings with a naturalist, ecologist, botanist, etc. Partner with other organizations/municipalities
- Host Amphibian Crossing Program (SP5.9.4) (Mr. Johnson will update these maps prior to their February meeting).
- Host biennial Mascoma River clean up (every 2 years)- June or July 2026 (SP5.8.3)
- Participation with the Upper Valley Forest Health Work Group
- Increased awareness and encouragement for land protection (MP 5.6a.4)
 - Note: updated CoL ConCom Program Web Page
 - Chair Riley said there is ample opportunity for outreach to the community and information sharing in the weekly City of Lebanon communication

Mr. Donald Lacey inquired if they have Wild About Lebanon scheduled for this upcoming year. They do not and Chair Riley said that she would love to; based on lower attendance from their most recent ones, she wondered if they need to infuse these with more “spice” and perhaps have some experts in to talk about a specific topic. She encouraged members to brainstorm for ideas for this. They can use “Nature Groupie” for advertising their events and efforts.

Mr. Chris Johnson volunteered to lead photography events and there was much enthusiasm about this as it should prove to be a draw to Wild About Lebanon. He suggested they also partner with the Upper Valley Photo Society. Mr. Lacey suggested AVA Gallery; these groups are connected. The goal will be to take in nature in a more artistic way and look at conservation areas with an eye towards aesthetics.

Mr. Heistad commented on having a Wild About Lebanon event at the Rutter Land; they can decide who best to lead this.

Chair Riley will be the point person and Con Com members can email her so that she can help organize events.

Ms. Hirai said she would like for them to have a walk(s) with a focus on birds and bird walks and Mr. Johnson has some ideas about who can lead these. – Martin Brook and the newly conserved Rutter lands are 2 possibilities.

Mr. Goodwin had several ideas for consideration including reaching out to include other neighboring conservation commissions such as Hanover and Hartford, the local Audubon Society, etc. as well as other organizations and people (for example UVLT) to see what they might already have planned and consider joint efforts to co-sponsor events.

He added that there is some funding available to draw speakers (e.g. wetland specialist)

Chair Riley said that she has reached out to Jay Cairelli, Director of Public Works, about the solar powered digital signs (mobile) and the plan is to have them stationed at either end of Old Pine Tree Cemetery Road, because there are lots of amphibians crossing at that road. She hopes they are functioning and can be deployed to put these to use. It was also agreed that publicizing these crossings can help increase public awareness and an opportunity to see these in real time.

Mr. Johnson committed to updating the amphibian crossing maps, using their most recent data, prior to their February meeting.

Chair Riley said they might have a spring vernal pool event or meeting; historically vernal pool has been a big draw for the public.

She also said that the Hanover Conservation Commission is working on creating a gathering for some other Upper Valley Conservation Commissions, possibly as early as late Winter or early Spring 2026.

Land Conservation

- Expand the conservation land portfolio within the City of Lebanon (MP 5.4a.1),(SP 5.6.2) areas of interest: Starr Hill area, Mouth of the Mascoma, Bakers Crossing
- Work with the Upper Valley Land Trust regarding permanently protecting Baker's Crossing (SP 5.6.2)
- Review and modify as needed existing regulations related to OS protection (e.g. ridgeline, aquifer, steep slopes, etc.) (MP 5.2b.2 & MP 5.5a.4) Steep slopes (SP 5.9.1)
- Assess the feasibility mitigation projects as part of the Wetland Permit process
- Implement recommendations from the Northern Lebanon Study (SP 5.9.3)
- Implement recommendations from the wildlife corridor plans (SP 5.9.3)
- Examine the applicability of a vernal pool overlay district (SP 5.9.2)
- Conduct review of existing steep slope regulations (SP 5.9.1)

Miscellaneous

- Explore LOST Fund Investment Opportunities ***
- Continue to pursue participation in the NH F&G doe harvest program (SP 5.6.3)
- Innovative stormwater regulation existing in the Site Plan regulations to be migrated to the subdivision regulations as appropriate (SP 5.8.2)
- Continue to be involved in the inclusion of green infrastructure to the max extent possible for the pending Exit 18 project **ConCom request to add to the SP
- Incorporate **aquatic passage** and **wildlife friendly designs** into **culvert replacement projects** city-wide in line with NH Stream Crossing Initiative. (MP 5.2.22) **ConCom request to add to the SP
- Work with DPW to **reduce road salt use** near sensitive habitat areas. **ConCom request to add to the SP

****This account has in excess of \$1M, and it was agreed that it would be prudent to look at this account monthly, and to have statements sent to ConCom's Chair automatically. Someone will need to request this process to be automated.*

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

A. Biodiversity Group (Invasives)

B. Stewardship

-Ranger

-Trail Coordinator

-Monitors and Stewards

C. Wild about Lebanon

D. Amphibian Crossings

E. LUCT/Current Use

F. *Other Subcommittees – “Class 6 roads” Committee – get an update from this Committee- Ms. Riley said she would love to see this become a part of their public trail network, this important part of Lebanon history.*

7. OTHER BUSINESS:

A. FYIs

B. Follow Up

C. Workshops and Educational Opportunities

8. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

9. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting ended at 9:01PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Cinda Mersel

Recording Secretary