

FINAL

**LEBANON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
Remote Via Microsoft Teams
LebanonNH.gov/Live
May 14, 2026
6:30 PM**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sarah Riley (Chair), Andrew Faunce, Erling Heistad, Alt., Barbara Hirai, Donald Lacey, Ernst Oidtmann, **Pamela Lee, Alt., **Lynnette Madsen, Alt.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Bruce James, Vice Chair, Susan Almy, Alt., Chris Johnson

STAFF PRESENT: Mark Goodwin (GIS Coordinator) , Brian Vincent, City Engineer

1. CALL TO ORDER:

A. Chair Riley called the meeting to order at 6:32PM.

** Assigned voting privileges for today's meeting

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A. February 12, 2026

*Mr. Ernst Oidtmann MOVED to approve the Minutes of February 12, 2026, as amended.
Seconded by Mr. Erling Heistad*

**The MOTION was approved (5-0), 2 abstained*

B. April 9, 2026

*Mr. Ernst Oidtmann MOVED to approve the minutes as amended
Seconded by Mr. Don Lacey*

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

3. OPEN TO THE PUBLIC: None

4. PERMIT REVIEW:

A. **None

**Chair Riley stated that while ConCom does not have any permits to review this evening, they are potentially going to have one. There is a wetland application that the City has submitted for some impacts to water retention basins, technically wetlands, at the landfill. They were created relatively recently and they were proposing to fill those. They total 2,888 square feet and will be impacted by the next phase of

the landfill. Their function is water storage and that function will be met in other basins on the site. Chair Riley reviewed the application very thoroughly and decided to waive ConCom's right to intervene, thereby speeding up this process.

Mr. Goodwin explained that permit review process is a State of New Hampshire Department of Environmental services process. ConCom intervenes on every application, by default, with the one exception, City projects. This saves the taxpayers money. This landfill that Chair Riley spoke about this evening is an example of this.

5. STUDY ITEMS: None

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

A. Biodiversity Group (Invasives)

Mr. Lacey said that Lynn Fisher is newly licensed as an herbicide applicator for focused applications, and she has some projects planned for Ticknor, Storrs Hill and Baker's Crossing. He explained to the new members that if used properly, herbicides can be very tree hugger friendly.

Chair Riley then provided an update about garlic mustard***, which is an invasive plant, and showed a sample of one of the signs that they have put out. ConCom teams up every May with the Recreational Department, to make and distribute signs and to publicize public pulling of garlic mustard. She and Ms. Hirai have been managing the pulled materials in those areas for about the past four years.

The strategy has been (and still is in most places) to black bag garlic mustard and take it to a landfill. It is labor intensive but very effective. Recently though, they used an alternative strategy of piling the garlic mustard only after pulling the plant out from its base with the roots and then separate the stems at the base of the plants from the flowering stalks. This step is important because if it has already gone to flower and you pile up these plants, the stems will grow to the light and find their way to set seed. So it's important to manage the piles properly. They are seeing good progress and their new process is working.

Their efforts with public outreach are also working because residents are working on the trails, and in their own yards too. And of course Don Lacey has been the member working at this the longest. He acknowledged Nicole Cormen saying she used to spend 10 hour days working with team to pull garlic mustard.

There will be a garlic mustard pulling event this Saturday, May 16th from 2-4PM at the Northern Rail Trail.

B. Stewardship
-Ranger

Mr. Goodwin introduced the Ranger concept. The Ranger is seasonal, and ConCom has a small budget for this role of stewardship for approximately 2,000 acres and this ranger clears the trails and makes sure that they are draining properly. He has a variety of other responsibilities such as blazing boundaries, investigating trespassing, making signs, etc. We have been fortunate the last two years to have Ranger Neil working part time for the City. This year he is completing his work early, by the end of May, because he will be starting his graduate program in Forestry Management in June. So far this year he has blazed three properties (identifies where property boundaries are but the red paint only lasts about 5 years. Contracting out for this is very expensive. He should be completely current on all boundary blazing before he leaves.

Also he has been up the Summit of Signal Hill trying to maintain the edges of the open summit meadow. Ron Bailey, a former ranger, has been helping him. They have two other priority projects, the buckthorns, and the signage, including completing kiosks with maps.

Mr. Goodwin explained that come June, we will reassess whether we will contract with a ranger for the summer months or wait to bring in a ranger in the Fall. Mr. Goodwin confirmed that they have purchased an electric chainsaw for Neil to use for smaller diameter trees (6"-8"). Neil has had safety training with chain saws. Mr. Goodwin uses bigger equipment and gets out and helps Neil with larger diameter trees.

He added that all of our conservation properties have standing kiosks at the entryways. They include the name of the property along with a map of the area.

-Trail Coordinator

Our trail coordinator is Vice Chair Bruce James. At the last meeting he shared that the Mountain Bike Association is going to be working on Lakeside Trail, on May 20th, at 5:00PM.

-Monitors and Stewards

Ms. Hirai (Steward) said that she had coordinated with Holly at Hypertherm to work along with 22 volunteers tomorrow at Two Rivers Conservation Area. Hypertherm does this a 2-3 times each year, clearing trails and removing invasives, but the weather prediction is not good so they have moved this to May 29th. Hypertherm has made noticeable progress in this area.

Mr. Goodwin mentioned that volunteer forms are to be completed by all volunteers.

Another member noted that the form is only good for one year, and that it is a cumbersome form to complete electronically. The idea was posed of being able to use paper forms. Chair Riley and Mr. Faunce will discuss this topic further.

Mr. Lacey thinks he'll be able to get out and mow at Two Rivers sometime after July 29th. He also mows at Baker's Crossing.

He has recently learned that he cannot be reimbursed for his own expenses, gas, wear and tear on his equipment, etc.

Mr. Faunce suggested that ConCom, along with other commissions and task force, come together to discuss their interests, needs, and overlapping challenges and then maybe together they come up with a solution and present a coordinated effort in a single conversation to inform the City Manager's office of what they need in their roles as volunteers.

Chair Riley said that they had a blueberry workday at Jackson Conservation on May 3rd. It went well and they had approximately 12 volunteers, with Lynn Fisher leading the charge. Also, John Collier, a repeat volunteer came with a battery powered long armed lopper and it helps him get a lot of work done. She added that the blueberry shrubs are looking great, and because of the mowing done last year, the paths are also in great shape.

Chair Riley said that the ash trees up on Starr Hill are getting hit hard by ash borer, in both the conserved and un-conserved areas. The vernal pools there are also full of egg masses, spotted salamanders, and wood frogs. She enjoys going up there.

She is concerned because she saw fresh wetland flags at the APD property. She is concerned they are looking to develop housing.

The City Manager suggested that ConCom arrange to do their own site visit at Martin Brook. In a Field Notes Friday video, Jason Berard of the Upper Valley Land Trust showed some of the work that the foresters has done wrote about this in Field Notes Friday and showed some of the work that the foresters had done in the portion of the property subject to the airport's avigation easement. The trees that are or would become safety hazards have been handled in an ecologically well thought out manner rather than going in and chopping everything down. Chair Riley said that mimicking natural blow downs and doing some girdling to create some standing dead trees is great for wildlife.

C. Wild about Lebanon None

D. Amphibian Crossings

Today Chair Riley asked DPW to take down the signs since the most exciting part of the season is over.

Looking ahead to next year, she plans to ask DPW to put the signs up earlier in the year, and to ask that the messaging be changed, as was discussed in a recent ConCom meeting. She has this as an action item.

She shared that a reporter from the Valley News had gone out with Chris Johnson, ConCom member, and published a short article along with some pictures, published on April 22nd. There was also a video on Instagram. She said Chris did a great job representing the Conservation Commission.

E. LUCT/Current Use

Chair Riley has again asked the Finance Department for more frequent and regular and comprehensive account statements. She is waiting to hear back from them.

F. Other Subcommittees

Mr. Faunce said since he is no longer the Chair of the Planning Board, she might want to get with Karen on any PB matters.

Chair Riley said that the Tree Board is very busy getting trees planted around the city. The next opportunity to help with this initiative is this Saturday morning, starting at 9:00AM. If anybody wants to dig in the ground, they are starting at Riverside, at the skate park on Glen Road. They'll be planting a number of trees there, replacing some trees that were vandalized and some to replace the anticipated demise of some ash trees that are currently on that site. From there they will go to the Memorial Pool and plant several trees there as well.

One of the recommendations of the Environmental Task Force was to bring a Soil Shop event to Lebanon. Soil Shop is a New Hampshire DES program that provides free soil screening for lead. They will be at the Farmers' Market May 28th and then May 28th running through June 5th, so people can drop off their soil samples at the Kilton Library. This information will also be posted on the City's website.

7. OTHER BUSINESS:

Since there are new members, everyone was invited to introduce themselves and share a bit of their background.

Ms. Barbara Hirai previously served with LEAC (Lebanon Energy Advisory Commission) and subsequently joined ConCom several years ago. She was a high school biology teacher. She works a lot on invasives and enjoys walking.

Mr. Earling Heistad was at Dartmouth College for 39 years. He has served on several commissions and he also served as a City Councilor for numerous years. He said by serving, you understand a lot more about the City of Lebanon and what its needs are. He thanked the new members for serving.

Mr. Don Lacey has served on ConCom for many years. He does a lot of work with invasives, does much of the mowing and maintenance work needs on conserved lands, and he is expert on native plants as well. He is a retired physician.

Mr. Ernst Oidtmann has been serving on the Conservation Commission for 18 years, many of those years as the Chair. He started organizing the Mascoma River cleanups back in 1996 and did that for several years. He was a practicing family physician for 40 years and just retired in 2019. He used to make house calls and has seen a lot in his time.

He grew up in Holland. He likes to hike one to two hours each day. He is also a longstanding member of the Rotary Club and plays piano for them at their weekly meetings. Some of his model ships are on display at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center.

Ms. Lynnette Madsen is a new Alternate member. She is pleased to be invited to join ConCom. She also serves on the Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee. She moved to the area about a year ago. She enjoys walking. She also has interest in helping with any ConCom ADA discussions or initiatives.

Mr. Andrew Faunce is a relatively new member to ConCom as a Council Representative. He is also a newly elected City Councilor, having previously served three years on the Planning Board, most recently as the Chair. He is also currently serving on the Lebanon Housing Task Force. He previously worked with the West Lebanon Revitalization Committee. Additionally, he volunteers at Ava Gallery, where he also serves on the Board of Directors.

As a result of these roles, he believes that Conservation and Planning can work more functionally and beneficially by working together more.

Ms. Pamela Lee is also a new Alternate member and has been a resident of West Lebanon since 2005. She was invited here to work on her post-doctoral at Dartmouth Medical and subsequently got wonderful training with two local doctors for a few years. After that she went to the Veteran's Hospital in White River Junction and has been serving there for the past 19 years.

She feels like this place has given her so much as a home and she wanted to find a way to become involved in her community. In addition to her work, she is passionate about conservation, birds, and invasives. She is happy to be serving.

Chair Riley said that she has been serving on the Conservation Commission since 2017, first as an Alternate. Then when Mr. Oidtmann stepped down as Chair, she stepped into that role. She also serves on the Tree Board and the Lebanon Housing Task Force, representing ConCom for both, and she is the acting Chair for the Mascoma River Local Advisory Committee (LAC).

She and her husband have lived in Lebanon since 2007. They have a 14 year old son. Since she lives only about ½ mile from City Hall, she is able to walk or ride to many meetings. Her background is in plant ecology.

Mr. Mark Goodwin, (GIS Coordinator, Planning office, City of Lebanon) is the staff liaison. He has been with the City for 23 years and came here from Flagstaff where he worked with the EPA as an international consultant. His background is in natural resource management as well as planning, and he completed his thesis on biodiversity and landscape ecology. Day to day he does a lot of property management and hands on stewardship himself, on the various City of Lebanon conserved properties

He's an empty nester now so he has the opportunity to get up at 4:30AM to enjoy and work on a 250 acre woodlot he has about an hour from Lebanon, along with the work he does for the City both in and outside the office.

Earlier in the meeting Ms. Hirai asked to revisit their Goals for 2026 and Chair Riley projected these on the room screen. ****

Chair Riley said they would cover this briefly and encouraged new members to familiarize themselves with the Conservation Commissions categories and goals.

The four categories (bolded) include:

Property Stewardship: Most recently they are working on obtaining a new City conservation land, the Rutter property, which is across the street from the Signal Hill property. The Land Trust will be implementing a plan for maintaining that land.

Conservation Commission is also responsible for trail maintenance and infrastructure needs of many conservation properties, trails, signage, kiosks, maps, etc. For example the work that Mr. Goodwin was describing earlier, work done by the Ranger, by Mr. Lacey, and by himself, and others.

Mr. Oidtmann mentioned handicap issues brought to light recently by a speaker who came to the Rotary meeting, she was in a wheelchair and was the Wheelchair Women's Champion in New Hampshire, and she pointed out many access things from the perspective of being handicapped.

There was much interest from this group and so Chair Riley agreed to include Ms. Madsen, Ms. Lee, and Ms. Hirai in on any pertinent communications or opportunities.

Chair Riley suggested a field trip to Distant Hills in Walpole, that has some accessible trails. All members are interested in participating.

Education/Outreach

ConCom played a small role in the 2025 Mascoma River Watershed Planning Study, and the final report is now complete. Mr. Goodwin said this will be discussed at an upcoming Planning Office meeting, and he will then update ConCom.

Mr. Goodwin had said in a previous meeting that this report is only a document, unless action is taken. They need someone to spearhead this initiative.

Mascoma River cleanup is done every two years and is currently in the pipeline, per Mr. Oidtmann.

Chair Riley explained their interest in the Deer Management Assistance Program(DMAP). We need to try to manage our deer population, because the deer overpopulation is negatively impacting the structure and health of our forests. This is because the deer eat the tree seedlings or saplings that are trying to regenerate to become the next generation of canopy trees. This also has a negative effect on the understory.

Hanover is currently enrolled in DMAP. Lebanon has enough land to qualify for this program and so ConCom needs to reach out to City Council and they also need to reach out to landowners.

Land Conservation

Chair Riley likened Land Conservation as their “marathon” and she encourages new members to look into the National Resources Inventory (NRI), which explains why certain places are special and what makes them special. This influences what they might want to protect.

She wants to work to implement some of the recommendations in the Northern Lebanon Study. They have been working in part with the UNH Extension to examine the applicability of a vernal pool overlay district which would add protections to not only the wetland itself but also maybe add a buffer.

Miscellaneous

Another important goal is to incorporate aquatic passage and wildlife friendly design into culvert replacement projects city-wide in line with NH Stream Crossing Initiative.

Working with DPW to reduce road salt use near sensitive habitat areas is also of concern. She has asked DPW questions online but hasn’t looked to see if there are ways to further reduce our road salt use in sensitive areas.

It was noted that these goals were pulled from Chapter 5 in the Master Plan; which is also available to read.

A. FYIs

Regarding the unnamed stream crossing Hanover Street extension, DES has requested more information from the City. They’ve also asked for information on the Interstate 89 permit and reminded the applicants that they need to answer the Conservation Commission’s question, which they have not done so far. They have a limited number of days to do so.

Mr. Goodwin shared that the Agenda goes out one week before each meeting, so if any members have anything they would like on the agenda, please let Mr. Goodwin and Ms. Taplin know. It is preferred and helpful to have these be submitted no later than the Wednesday before the following Thursday’s meeting.

Mr. Ernst Oidtmann shared that he will not be renewing his ConCom membership when it expires. His last meeting will be in June. He shared that he might sit in the audience for some meetings. He added that he has enjoyed 18 years of being on the Conservation Commission.

B. Follow Up-None

C. Workshops and Educational Opportunities-None

8. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

9. ADJOURNMENT:

*Ms. Hirai MOVED for adjournment
Seconded by Mr. Heistad*

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:58 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Cinda Mersel
Recording Secretary

*** Garlic mustard is a shade tolerant, aggressive plant and is known for crowding out native wildflowers and vegetation, and it also releases chemical into the soil that then inhibit the growth of other plants. It has no natural predators. It is edible.

**** ConCom 2026 Goals (Draft) can be found in the Agenda Packet for their January 8, 2026 meeting.