

FINAL

**LEBANON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Remote Via Microsoft Teams
[LebanonNH.gov/Live](https://lebanonnh.gov/Live)
Thursday, April 8th, 2021
6:30 PM**

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Susan Almy, Suellen Balestra (Alt.)

STAFF PRESENT: Mark Goodwin (GIS Coordinator)

1. CALL TO ORDER – Chair Oidtmann called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM

- Mr. Mark Goodwin reviewed the meeting procedures for remote meetings and NH RSA 91-A “Right to Know” requirements. A Roll Call of Commission Members who participated remotely are listed above.
- Chair Oidtmann appointed Darla Bruno as a regular voting member in place of Susan Almy.

The Conservation Commission took the meeting agenda out of order by taking agenda item 4A. before 1B and 2A.

3. PERMIT REVIEW: None

4. STUDY ITEMS:

A. Proposed Recreation Use for Two Rivers Conservation Area: Mr. Coats gave an update as to what had gone on behind the scenes such as reviewing deeds and covenants. They now have a better understanding of the wetland mitigation projects, which there are two of. One dates back quite a few years and had the most protections around it. It affected the meadow area on the north end of the property. That would change one of the fields that was presented to the Conservation Commission in the last meeting. It would bring the project down from 3 fields to 2 fields and would condense the project to the parts of the property that are less sensitive.

Mr. Coats also had a quick conversation with the Upper Valley Land Trust and received an email from Jason Berard that basically said that the Land Trust’s role was to review a proposal when there was one to make sure the proposal would be consistent with the easement. They said other departments may want to review the proposal for other aspects. The email went on to say that the Upper Valley Land Trust did not wish to insert their own land ethic into the discussion. They also suggested reviewing how the project could affect the transient population. They politely declined the opportunity to attend tonight’s meeting.

Mr. James said since the last meeting he had done some research on the soils at Two Rivers Conservation Area. He participated in a site walk through with Mr. Ron Bailey, Chair Oidtmann and Vice Chair Riley. The soil at Two Rivers Conservation Area is comprised of fluvial material (flood plain material of the

Mascoma River) and goes by the name of Suncook. Mr. James explained that water perks through the soil very rapidly when the water table is low enough. It is also prone to flooding; it is very sandy and very permeable. The vegetation on the land was very common around the area, all the way along the Connecticut river. Mr. James went on to explain that the Natural Resources Conservation Service puts out information about soils and the potential and limitations of soils in different areas. He said they listed playgrounds as a very limited use for the Two Rivers Conservation Area's soil type and speculated that it may be because of flooding.

Mr. James also said that Mr. Bailey told him that the US Army Core of Engineers has some restrictions placed on the area in question for flood water storage for the Mascoma River. That was information that Mr. James felt the Commission would need more details on. Mr. James also pointed out that when he was touring the property, he noticed a lot of piles of asphalt and wondered if the property would be considered a hazardous materials dumpsite. He felt that the project needed to be looked at in a more comprehensive way. Mr. James continued to explain his thoughts and suggestions about the property.

Mr. Heistad asked Mr. Coats if they had looked at the land on the north side of the Mascoma river? Mr. Coats said they have considered that area and have shied away from pursuing it for two main reasons. One reason was that the net gain of a field there still would not meet their needs for fields. He went on to say that they were thinking about the land in conjunction with Two Rivers Conservation Area and the possibility of conserving some of that land in addition to the proposed project. He went on to suggest some potential projects that could be done on the property north of the Mascoma river. Mr. Heistad said if they could work together to make that a part of the Two Rivers Conservation Area project, he thought it would be a big plus all the way around.

Ms. Bruno said her concern was that if trees were removed and the land flattened out at Two Rivers Conservation area, it would cause a bigger flood risk for the businesses there. She said the ground could possibly get more compacted from the fields being used. She thought that was a consideration to make. She also said she did not see evidence of the other playing fields in the City being used to their fullest. She said behind where she lived there was a baseball field, she did not think was used a lot.

Ms. Hirai pointed out that the name of Two Rivers was Two Rivers Conservation Area, not Two Rivers Park. She said that the name was important because she felt that changed the way people looked at the property.

Vice Chair Riley said she though Ms. Hirai and Ms. Bruno said a lot of what was on her mind. She said the primary purpose and responsibility of the Conservation Commission was to conserve and protect the City's natural resources. The second responsibility was for them to manage flood waters. For that reason, she did not think putting in more pavement in that area was a good idea. She thought putting fields in there was the wrong way to go. She would gladly collaborate on passive recreation and improving the trail network, including passive recreation on the north shore as well, but not clearing trees on the land.

Mr. Lacey said that when the project was first presented, he thought it was a possibility of a win-win situation. Since then, he has been on a walk with Mr. Bailey and had more time to think about the proposal. He pointed out the forest of trees on the property and thought it would be totally inappropriate to cut down those trees for the playing fields. He said he had changed his view and did not think playing fields were a good idea for Two Rivers Conservation Area.

Mr. Johnson said that in the fall, the Conservation Commission talked a lot about conserving land, and he felt that Two Rivers Conservation Area was already property that had been conserved. As one of the few places in Lebanon to have that honor, he did not want to see the land developed at all.

Mr. Coats responded to the comments made by the Commission members. He said he could provide data if the Commission wanted it on the use of the fields that the City of Lebanon owned. He went on further to say that the baseball fields were used every single day, except for Sundays, during baseball season. They are not completely used in the summertime, but they were used. The Recreation Department try not to overuse the fields in the summertime. Currently there is no relief in site for the protection of the fields. He explained that the Recreation Department was a progressive Recreational Department that encouraged kids and families to explore and learn how to take part in other recreational activities such as hiking, running, kayaking, and rock climbing. Traditional sports in the City of Lebanon were alive and active and the Recreational Department, currently, is not able to keep up with the demands on the fields. He worried about the longevity and care of the fields. He thought a holistic approach was needed to look at the overall needs of the community. Mr. Coats continued to explain ideas he had to continue this discussion with the Commission.

Mr. Lacey asked if there was any chance that the Recreational Department could purchase land to be used for fields? Mr. Coats said they had explored different areas where land could possibly be purchased. He said they would need to be sitting on a significant amount of money to purchase land when it came up for sale.

Vice Chair Riley asked about the Iron Horse developers, the land that abutted the fields on Seminary Hill? She asked if the City had spoken to anyone about buying land from them? Mr. Coats said they have approached the owners of the property and the developers about a couple of different things but there has not been much response to the City.

Chair Oidtmann said he read the deed and it referred to one playing field. He thought there were environmental and legal issues that would need to be surmounted to pursue the field creation at Two Rivers Conservation Area.

Ms. Joan Monroe, member of the public, said she had heard a lot of good information. She made several comments about the animals and birds in the area and thought that the hazardous material that was on the property should not be disturbed since it looked like nature was doing its job reclaiming the land. She said she believed that removing invasive species without planting something that you do want there would only allow the invasive species to grow back again.

Ms. Monroe asked about the exercise trail at the base of Storrs Hill? Is that trail not be kept up and used? Mr. Coats said it was a Boy Scout project from years ago. Ms. Monroe said that she thought the City should get something legal in writing to use the athletic fields next to the old junior high school. She also said she thought there could be potential recreation use at some of the larger companies in the City who may not need as much room as they once thought they did since more employees were working from home now. Mr. Coats said that it has been the City's priority to try to get the old junior high fields legally available to the Recreation Department, but it was not a simple task. Even if those fields were made into City property it still did not address the issue at hand.

Ms. Bruno said she would like to have Mr. Bailey's input on the property.

Mr. Coats said that the K-Mart Plaza landowner seemed open to the idea of playing fields out back and shared parking on the plaza side of the property line. They liked the idea of the property being worked on and spoke of their concerns of the encampments on the Two Rivers Conservation Area.

Mr. Goodwin said the Commission did not have to take any formal action on this idea that had been presented. His observation was that the Conservation Commission has said no to the project.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: March 11th, 2021

Mr. Heistad MOVED to approve the March 11th, 2021 Minutes as amended and presented in the April 8th, 2021 agenda packet.

Seconded by Ms. Riley.

Amendments:

Change any reference to Two Rivers to Two Rivers Conservation Area.

Remove the "e" from Mr. Coats name throughout the minutes.

Page 2, Line 40 Change "was playing fields" to "a playing field"

Page 3, Line 39 Change "convenance" to "covenants"

Page 5, Line 1 Remove the hyphen between eco system

Page 6, Line 22 Change "endorsed" to "encouraged"

Page 6, Line 24 Change "city" to "City"

Roll Call Vote:

Ernst Oidtman, Erling Heistad, Chris Johnson, Sarah Riley, Donald Lacey, Bruce James, and Darla Bruno all voting Yea.

None voted Nay.

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

1. CALL TO ORDER CONT.:

1B. Election of Officers-Chair and Vice Chair: Mr. Goodwin said that they would be holding the election of officers tonight, but that they would move the election of officers to January next year to be in line with all the other groups that meet.

Mr. Heistad nominated Ernst Oidtman for Chair and Mr. Lacey seconded. Chair Oidtman nominated Sarah Riley for Chair. Ms. Riley said she would not take the Chair position without Mr. Oidtman rejecting his nomination. Chair Oidtman said he would serve one more year if elected. Vice Chair Riley turned down Chair Oidtman's nomination.

Roll Call Vote:

Erling Heistad, Chris Johnson, Sarah Riley, Donald Lacey, Bruce James, and Darla Bruno all voting Yea.

None voted Nay.

**** The Vote on the Nomination was approved (6-0).***

**Chair Oidtmann nominated Sarah Riley for Vice Chair.
Mr. Heistad seconded.**

Roll Call Vote:

Ernst Oidtmann, Erling Heistad, Chris Johnson, Donald Lacey, Bruce James, and Darla Bruno all voting Yea.

None voted Nay.

*** The Vote on the Nomination was approved (6-0).**

Mr. Goodwin said he would make sure the Rules of Procedures were updated to reflect that the elections would take place in January from now on.

4. STUDY ITEMS CONT.:

B. Volunteer Program Update: Ms. Hirai said they were getting volunteers to work on the trails including Chambers Park and two volunteers at Boston Lot. She hoped that when they started getting volunteers for the Stewardship program that more projects would be done on the properties.

Vice Chair Riley went over the new volunteer web page. She explained that there was a place for people who were on the trails to fill out an incident report of any issues that they may find. The public did not have to sign up as a volunteer to do that.

Vice Chair Riley showed the Commission the volunteer sign-up form and went through the steps to fill out the form. She also explained what each volunteer position was expected to do. She said that they were trying to get people to sign up for the Stewardship positions. She also explained that the double asterisk pointed out that a trail had at least 2 stewards working on a trail, already. The Commission asked that the Stewardship position produce a report twice a year on the trail they were responsible for and to walk the trails after major weather events to see if any maintenance would need to be done on the trail.

Ms. Hirai said they were currently sending out welcome letters to the new volunteers. Discussion was had among Commission members on the volunteer program. Vice Chair Riley also went over the trail assessment form that the volunteers would be asked to fill out. They were also encouraging the volunteers to send in any photos they may feel would be helpful of the work they did or an issue that they may have discovered. Discussion was also had among the Commission members about if there would be identification given to the volunteers. Mr. Johnson thought the Commission members also should have some sort of identification card.

5. OTHER BUSINESS:

Chair Oidtmann asked Mr. Goodwin if there was any news on the Current Use money. Mr. Goodwin said the Accounting Department was planning on doing a report semi-annually.

Chair Oidtmann reminded everyone that there would be a bog bridge building day on Saturday, May 29th, 2021 at Boston Lot. The trail they would be working on was the Lakeside Trail, going clockwise starting at the dam, heading northeast.

Vice Chair Riley said she was hoping there could be a clean up at Star Hill. She said there was a resident abutter who showed interest in cleaning up waste that had been dumped at the Eldridge Street trailhead.

6. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara R. Higgins
Recording Secretary