



Conservation Commission

December 12, 2024 7:00 PM

Town Hall Auditorium

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Members Present: Ellen Snyder (Chair), David Bell, Cris Blackstone, Jessica Cann (Alternate), Emma Fortin (School Liaison), Colin Lawson (Alternate), Brian Ward (Town Council Rep. ex officio), and Zachary Angelini (Alternate)

Members Absent: Melissa Sharples (Vice-Chair), Jeff Goldknopf, Tom Jones, and Julianna Tyson

Town Staff: Bridgette Grotheer, Land Use Administrator

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Roll Call

The Chair appointed **Colin Lawson** and **Jessica Cann** as a voting members this evening. The five voting members include **Ellen Snyder, David Bell, Cris Blackstone, Jessica Cann,** and **Colin Lawson.**

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Approve Meeting Minutes

No minutes this evening.

5. Financial Summary

The Chair reported that the Conservation Fund has a balance of \$134,466.28 and the Schanda Park Fund balance stands as \$4,621.11. Together they total \$139,087.39. We received some interest and a downpayment has been expended for the bridge work at Wiggan Farm. Unfortunately, the weather right now is too cold. The work will likely begin in March. The General Fund balance is \$3,934.47. The NHACC dues were paid.

6. Committee/Board Reports

Town Council: **Brian** reported the Ash Swamp Road bridge replacement has received funding and the work will begin in the spring. The RR Street easement abandonment was approved. The Town is in negotiations with the Police Union for a wage increase. The

Town starting salary is considerably below that of neighboring towns. Currently there are thirteen positions in the PD and five are vacant. Salary increases will be on the ballot next March.

Planning Board/Planning Department: **Bridgette** reported that the PB approved two applications at their last meeting for: 1) Great Cove Landscaping, 63 Elm Street and 2) EPW, LLC and TFMoran, Inc., 60 Exeter Road. The PB also discussed re-zoning and they will begin their efforts again in January. **Bart** and **Jeff** are still working on the overlay districting for wetland buffers.

Master Plan SubCommittee: **Ellen** gave a brief update on the recent meeting. The SRPC will be attending their next meeting to discuss the “themes” in each chapter under preparation. **Ellen** is also working on the Recreation Chapter and they would like input from ConCom members. They have prepared a questionnaire. She asks that members take a moment to consider their ideas and respond to her.

Riverfront Advisory Committee/Schanda Park: The Chair reported for **Sam** that the RFAC would like a joint meeting with the ConCom in January to discuss Schanda Park. The Chair asks that members review the deeds she included in the packet before the meeting in January. The permanent closure of the parking gate to Heron Point was discussed again. The Town Attorney is reviewing the deed for Heron Point in terms of putting a bridge over the Lamprey for access. Thank you to DPW for funding the recent tree removal!

Energy and Environment Advisory Committee: No report this evening.

School Liaison: **Emma** reported on the recent activities at school. They plan some rock painting events for areas outside to brighten up the school during the winter. They will be using non-toxic paint for these events. **Cris** asked about participation at the school. **Emma** reported that the Environmental Club is 40 members strong (mostly students from grades 8-12, with a few from the Middle School).

The 300th Newmarket Celebration: No report this evening.

The Chair received a request from the Nature Conservancy for a letter of support for inclusion with their grant application to NOAA on salt marsh restoration – sea level rise/ restoration of marsh kelp/ marsh migration/ restoring marsh health. The members agreed that the Chair should go ahead and provide a letter of support. Thank you **Ellen**!

7. Discussion: NH Plan Riverfront Charrette: Schanda Park & Heron Point Sanctuary

The Chair asked to postpone this discuss to the next meeting. There was no objection.

8. Easement Monitoring

Ellen reported for **Tom. Julianna** has completed the report on the Bald Hill Reservation (owned by SELT and the Town owns the easement). **Ellen** completed the Silverman/Schneer properties on Neal Mill Road. The State will do the Wiggin Farm and the Dearborn property. The SELT will do the Nostrum, Hilton and PR-L this year. Once all the reports are submitted, the ConCom will review them to check if there are any conditions which may need attention. The Chair spoke about the ‘Current Conditions Report’ which will be prepared on the Nostrum Farm for the new owners. **David** and **Ellen** went out to look at Smith Sisters. Monitoring is complete!

9. Land Conservation

Rosa Property: Ben Engel, Conservation Project Manager with the SELT, will be our staff contact for this project. Right now, he is preparing an RFP in order to get an appraisal

on the Fee Acquisition portion (Durham side) and Conservation Easement portion (Newmarket side).

Mitchell Property: This project is moving along. The ConCom has approved \$100,000, NHDES Drinking Water has approved \$300,000, LCHIP has approved \$250,000, and LRAC has approved \$100,000. Duane Hyde is preparing for another property appraisal which is required for any Federal monies to be expended. **Bridgette** will check on where our funds are sitting since the account was closed per the Financial Office.

10. Project Updates

Prime Wetlands Mapping: Mark West has projected that the new digital maps will be completed by the third week in December and will be ready for us in January.

Ash Swamp Road: turtle crossing/aquatic passage: The Chair reported that the America the Beautiful grant program from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation was not funded. Lindsay Butler will continue to pursue avenues of funding.

The Chair sent members information on a webinar program from Taking Action for Wildlife. She will send further information shortly. If members participate from Newmarket, we may be eligible for grant funding.

11. Events, Outreach, and Education

UNH Capstone Project: Community Guide on Vernal Pool Mapping and Salamander

Crossing Brigades: **Zach** spoke about contacting the Harris Center for Conservation Education in Hancock ([Harris Center for Conservation Education in Hancock, NH](https://harriscenter.org/)). They organize Salamander Crossing Brigades to help amphibians cross roads to reach vernal pools. He would like to formalize a "Seacoast Salamander Crossing Brigade". The students at UNH will be working on this for spring. Erin Hale, Vice-Chair of the Durham Conservation Commission is a coordinator for Sustainability Dual Major program at UNH where most of the volunteers will be recruited. **Zach** hopes to have information about the project available for TurtleFest 2025. The Chair mentioned that we could apply for another PREPA grant for mapping vernal pools in Newmarket!

(<https://prepestuaries.org/2025-2026-prepa-grants-request-for-proposals/>)

TurtleFest 2025 – May 10, 2025: **Ellen** reviewed the draft schedule for May 10.

Cris discussed the T-Shirt and logo design by John Herman. Everyone really liked the design! The Chair asked members to think about other potential businesses to include in our fund raising efforts. **Bart** is working on a possible event at the Mill Space on the evening before and the Library is very interested in holding special events prior to May 10. The list of 'things to do' was outlined. **Emma** mentioned that the Net Zero or Environmental Team are discussing preparing special exhibits just for TurtleFest.

Rain Barrels: The rain barrels cannot be shipped anymore, so alternatives were discussed. Gardener's Supply in Greenland has a large selection of rain barrels available ([Our Garden Centers | Gardener's Supply](#)). We might consider preparing a video for TurtleFest and DCAT discussing rain barrels and installation.

Newmarket Library: ConCom display: **Cris** discussed the exciting news from the Library Staff about the Conservation Connection Book Club coming up in January, February, and March. Books will include *Bicycling with Butterflies*, *Birding to Change the World*, and *Of Time and Turtles*. **Cris** will be the zoom operator and facilitate the discussion. Register here: [Conservation Connection Book Club](#). Lots of fun! **Cris** also discussed the special display section which the Library is dedicating to the Conservation Commission. More on this later!

12. Adjourn**Action:**

Motion: Cris Blackstone made a motion to adjourn at 8:58 PM.

Second: David Bell

Discussion: none

Vote: Unanimously Approved 5-0-0

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Frick, Recording Secretary

DCAT:

https://videoplayer.telvue.com/player/XSekdEeRsk0JHQVHAvKJVka7_5VjxKP/videos