



Conservation Commission

March 14, 2024 7:00 PM

Town Hall Auditorium

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Members Present: Ellen Snyder (Chair), David Bell, Cris Blackstone, Jessica Cann (Alternate) *via* zoom, Jeffrey Goldknopf (Planning Board Rep.), Tom Jones (Alternate), Colin Lawson (Alternate), Julianna Tyson, and Brian Ward (Town Council Rep. ex officio)

Members Absent: Sam Kenney, Melissa Sharples (Vice-Chair)

Town Staff Present: Bart McDonough, Director, Planning and Community Development and Lyndsay Butler, Town Engineer

Guests: Autumn Scott, SRPC, and Lauren White, UNH Graduate Student

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

[time on DCAT 2:50]

1. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Roll Call

The Chair appointed Alternates Tom Jones and Colin Lawson to serve this evening. The seven voting members include **Ellen Snyder, David Bell, Cris Blackstone, Jeff Goldknopf, Tom Jones, Colin Lawson, and Julianna Tyson.**

3. Public Comment

There was no one present for public comment.

4. Approve Meeting Minutes

No minutes to approve this evening.

5. Financial Summary

[time on DCAT 4:00]

The Chair reported that the Conservation Fund has a balance of \$135,248.05. The Richard Schanda Fund has \$4,621.11. Together the fund totals: \$139,869.16. There was some interest recorded with no expenditures last month. The General Fund has a balance of \$1,936.85. We received a check from LCHIP for the easement monitoring of Piscassic River-Loiselle for \$550.00.

Action

Motion: **Colin Lawson** made a motion to accept the check for \$550.00 from LCHIP for the annual monitoring of Piscassic River-Loiselle we completed and submitted to them.

Second: **Cris Blackstone**

Discussion: none
Vote: Approved 7-0-0

6. Guest Speaker:

[time on DCAT 7:32-30:10]

Lauren White, UNH Graduate Student, Turtle Road Crossings

Lauren is a current graduate student at UNH in the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment. She is completing her M.S. thesis on “Reducing Turtle Road Mortality in New Hampshire” and is here tonight to describe her research results after her data collection over the past two years with the ConCom. She is working in collaboration with NH F&G and NHDES. Her research focus is on the Blanding’s Turtles [Blanding's turtle - Wikipedia](#) who move from wetlands to wetlands approximately 3km/annum. The females generally reach maturity at ~14 yrs, but will migrate each year regardless of nesting. With higher populations and urban development, these turtles (and many other species of turtles) often must cross roads to reach the next wetland – passable culverts would be the best means of preventing the decline in turtle survivability. She examined ecopassages which have been created in other communities to evaluate their results using three questions: 1) is it physically passable, 2) how steep is the embankment slope for access to the road, and 3) is there a line of sight i.e. one can see light at the end of the culvert. Lauren set up cameras at 18 sites: 9 ‘high’ risk and 9 “low” risk. She surveyed turtle activity and the roadkill weekly from May to July 2023. To choose an ‘ecopassage’ location to reduce road mortality there are things to consider:

1) road accessibility i.e. embankment slope, road-wetland length, riparian continuity, nesting habitat, 2) road width, 3) speed limits, and 4) annual average daily traffic.

***Use rip-rap as retaining walls or fencing guides to direct turtles toward the culvert**

***Do not use fencing on the culvert openings in order to ease passability**

***Ensure that there is line-of-sight in the culvert to entice turtles**

***Use temporary Turtle Crossing signs to alert drivers during peak season**

She was asked if artificial light sources were helpful inside the culvert. It can be, but natural sources of light are much better. Another question was about the speed of crossing. Her cameras took pictures every 2 min during the peak times and turtles would cross in approximately 4 min. Thank you Lauren – great work!!

The Chair received an email from Josh Megyesy, a wildlife biologist with the New Hampshire Fish and Game’s Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program. He is putting together a pre-proposal for a grant from the America the Beautiful Challenge. This is a remarkable initiative anchored by an initial commitment of \$440 million in Federal resources over the next five years. Administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), this public-private grant program supports locally led ecosystem restoration projects. He would like to include the Ash Swamp Road site in the application which is due in a few weeks. The members agreed that the Chair should speak further with Josh and see what information he needs from us to facilitate our involvement.

[time on DCAT 32:30]

Lyndsay Butler, Town Engineer, was invited this evening to discuss the Ash Swamp Road culvert issues. DPW has tagged/identified the culvert as needing replacement. Currently, the culvert requires very heavy regular maintenance to remain open and free flowing. She is in support of seeking funding from the America the Beautiful Challenge grant with Fish and Game. We must begin with a design and move on to the funding sources, permitting,

and timeline for construction. After the design, the bidding and permitting would be anticipated for FY2026-2027. Lauren White mentioned that she has photos of culvert wildlife activity (beavers!) and she will email them to the Chair. She captured the beavers getting 'busy' blocking the culvert again right after the DPW has cleared the opening. The members discussed the possible use of fencing to direct the turtles to a more narrow spot to cross the road. **Jeff** asked Lauren to recommend a best time of year for the road work...October construction would be best. The Chair appointed a small working group for the grant prep: **Jeff, Ellen, Colin, and Lyndsay** all agreed to serve.

7. Master Plan Update

[time on DCAT 53:15]

Natural Resources, Water Resources, Open Space Plan

Present this evening to make a presentation are **Bart McDonough**, Town Planner, and **Autumn Scott**, Regional Planner with SRPC. **Bart** promoted the visioning session planned for Saturday from 8:30-12:30. He discussed the proposed schedule for the session. Many members planned to attend. **Autumn** said that 50 people have registered so far to attend. She discussed the outline of the 2024 Open Space Plan...in particular, she wanted to discuss the section headings to make sure that nothing was missing. Members agree to take it home to study and send comments to **Autumn** directly. **Autumn** would like any comments on the elements before March 22. She has taken all the comments from the last meeting on the evaluation tool (using the Rochester plan as a template) and created a new draft for everyone to consider. Questions to consider: 1) does this document provide information to evaluate the property being considered and 2) how easy is it to use. The members took a few minutes to review the draft. Several members suggested changes for discussion. After reaching consensus, **Autumn** agreed to incorporate these into the next draft for the meeting in April. She hopes for the final draft to be ready for the May meeting. She recommends that a small ConCom group could review the document with Emma and Lynn to finalize the tool. The grant closes out at the end of May. **Autumn** has spoken with Melissa at NHDES (she is the grant manager for this project) about the time line for completion. Aimee Gigandet will join in the chapter draft process for Recreation component after the visioning workshop. **Bart** mentioned that there will be a 'visioning week' in April at the PB, Master Plan SubCom, and ConCom meetings and he wants to encourage as many community members to attend and share their ideas for in the chapter.

8 Committee/Board Reports

[time on DCAT 1:32:13]

Town Council: **Brian** reported on the two recent meetings since the last ConCom.

COAST spoke about their planning efforts to returning to provide transportation to the area. The 2023 Annual Town Report has been dedicated to Blooming Newmarket- the volunteer members work tirelessly every year to make town properties beautiful. The Community Power Coalition reported that 3,970 properties have enrolled into the program. Only 42 eligible accounts have opted out.

Planning Board/Town Planner: **Jeff** reported about the recent meeting. An updated plan for the 3-5 Railroad Street proposal has just been submitted (it includes information discussed at the TRC). The PB plans to discuss the possibility of including a ConCom member on all future TRCs. This would facilitate the ConCom being "in-the-loop" when new proposals for development are considered. **Bart** spoke about the re-zoning plans for

the N. Main Street area. He plans to meet with all the neighbors in that area on April 18 and 19 at the Mill Space. He is exploring many different funding possibilities for the two areas originally studied in the 'Gateways to Newmarket' project in 2019 - Rt. 108 by the golf course and Rt. 152 by the gravel pit.

Riverfront Advisory Committee/Schanda Park: The Chair mentioned that **Sam Kenney** did not renew his membership on the ConCom, but he would like to remain as our representative to the RFAC. The members were very happy with this suggestion. Thank you **Sam** for all your hard work on the ConCom!!! **Bart** spoke about the new signs planned for Schanda Park and Moonlight Brook. He provided the members with copies to discuss and suggest changes. He will send another draft to members before printing and posting.

Energy and Environment Advisory Committee: **Julianna** added to what **Brian** mentioned in his TC report. Eleven households opted to pay more for a better renewable energy share from the Coalition. Joe LaMattina suggested that the CPCNH look into energy rebates and also look at solar arrays which might benefit several neighboring communities.

Chair's Report

The Chair mentioned that the Sewer and Water Department is seeking funds from the State through our congressional delegation to fund the repairs for the sewer leak under the Lamprey River (or redirection of the sewer line). They asked for a letter of support from the ConCom. The Chair has drafted a letter (with editorial suggestions from Sean Greig) and it is ready to send. The members agreed that this was a great idea.

Action

Motion: **Julianna Tyson** made a motion to ask the Chair to send a letter of support from the ConCom asking our State Congressional Delegation to seek funding to help with the sewer leak mediation work under the Lamprey River.

Second: **Cris Blackstone**

Discussion: none

Vote: **Approved 7-0-0**

9. Land Stewardship:

Wiggin Farm- Approve Invoices for the Kiosk

[time on DCAT 1:56:02]

The sign is done now. The members reviewed the invoices: 1) the sign prep was \$462.50, 2) the mapping was \$600.00, and 3) the printing was \$300.00.

Action

Motion: **Cris Blackstone** made a motion to approved the expenditure of funds on the three invoices submitted by the Chair.

Second: **Julianna Tyson**

Discussion: none

Vote: **Approved 7-0-0**

The new sign will be installed at the Earth Day work session on April 20.

Heron Point Boundaries and Tree

The Chair provided a Heron Point map for this discussion about missing boundary pins.

We should replace the missing monument, flag along the line, and remove the 'stuff' which is over the property line. We could get volunteers to help the property abutters in moving the 'stuff' back off the line. She is concerned about hazard tree removal as we go forward and has discussed with the Town about putting a line item in the Town budget. She will work with **Jeff** to get a quote from Doucet Survey for the flagging. **Brian** has agreed to discuss hazard trees with the TC.

Piscassic River-Loiselle Conservation Area

The Chair reported that **Melissa** has cleaned out the bird houses for the eager Blue Birds. There are 8 broken rails on the fence. Rick suggested that we replace the fence with boulders. **Jeff** suggested that we should speak with the abutters about this possibility. The Chair agreed to do this.

10. Trails

[time on DCAT 2:06:23]

Old Lee Class A Trail

The Chair took Lyndsay Butler out to see the vernal pool which drains directly down the trail and is eroding the trail. The bridge is 'kittywampus' and requires attention! She would like permission to get an estimate from the Trails Crew for the repair. Lyndsay will try to get the engineer who is working on the Ash Swamp Road bridge to have a quick look. The bridge is not really our issue because it is not on our land. **Bart** thinks we should get all parties together to discuss the bridge repair and possible funding sources.

11. Please Remember These Events!

Master Plan Open House: March 16th 8:30 AM – noon.

Wiggin Farm Kiosk Raising and other Task: Earth Day April 20 9:00 AM – noon

Heron Point Clean-Up: Newmarket Cares Day – May 3, 2024 (Heron Pt)

12. Outreach and Education

Videos of Guest Speakers

Cris is still working on this with Tim. Tim is very creative! More later!

13. Adjourn

[time on DCAT 2:13:58]

Action

Motion: **Julianna Tyson** made a motion to adjourn at 9:12 PM.

Second: **Tom Jones**

Discussion: none

Vote: **Approved 7-0-0**

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Frick, Recording Secretary

DCAT:

https://videoplayer.telvue.com/player/XSekkdEeRsk0JHQVHAvKJVka7_5VjxKP/videos