TOWN OF NEWMARKET NEW HAMPSHIRE

Joint Meeting
Conservation Commission
& Riverfront Advisory Committee

January 9, 2025 7:00 PM
Town Hall Auditorium
APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Conservation Commission Members Present: Ellen Snyder (Chair), Melissa Sharples (Vice-Chair), David Bell, Cris Blackstone, Juli Tyson, Jessica Cann (Alternate), Emma Fortin (School Liaison), Colin Lawson (Alternate), Brian Ward (Town Council Rep. ex officio), Zack Angelini (Alternate)
Conservation Commission Members Absent: Jeff Goldknopf, Tom Jones
Riverfront Advisory Committee Members Present: Sam Kenney (Chair & Conservation Commission Rep.), Joe LaMattina (Town Council Rep.), Ingrid Ahlberg
Riverfront Advisory Committee Members Absent: Dale Pike
Town Staff: Bart McDonough, Director of Planning & Community Development, Lyndsay Butler, Town Engineer, Sue Frick, Recording Secretary, Bridgette Grotheer, Land Use Administrator
Others Present: Kyle Pimental, SRPC Assistant Director, Liz Durfee, Design & Planning, LLC

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. [time on DCAT 02:42]

1. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Roll Call

The seven voting members include **Ellen Snyder, Melissa Sharples, David Bell, Cris Blackstone, Juli Tyson, Jessica Cann,** and **Zachary Angelini.**

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Joint discussion with the Riverfront Advisory Committee: Results from the Riverfront Charrette and Planning for the Downtown Riverfront

[time on DCAT 05:22]

Sam introduced that in addition to the Land & Water Conservation chapter in the Master Plan, there will also be a chapter dedicated to the Downtown Riverfront. With that chapter, the Riverfront Advisory Committee wants to ensure that they are on the same page with the Conservation Commission in regard to Schanda Park and Heron Point, hence the meeting tonight. **Liz Durfee** is working on the chapter, and came to the committee's meeting in December as well as going to the next meeting on January 13th and potentially in February too to work on the chapter.
The goal of tonight is to make sure there is some concurrence between the two groups for future goals of the riverfront area, and to go over the charrette presentation.
Sam continued to present the charrette presentation.

Discussion included explaining that the dates for the charrette were October 18 and 19, put on by PlanNH, a nonprofit, with 20-25 volunteer members consisting of planners, engineers, architects, etc. The first day had a walk of the downtown to familiarize the group with the area followed by activities with residents and business owners to collect feedback on the first day. The second day was then the volunteers working to draft conceptual ideas from what was discussed, and then presenting that to members of the public.

Sam reviewed the PlanNH presentation, with concepts from it including a potential pedestrian bridge to Heron Point, increased signage and wayfinding, ideas for improvements to Schanda Park in relation to sea level rise such as an elevated platform for increased space and access, with art and climbable structures also discussed. Increased dock space for recreation opportunities were also conceptualized, as well as creating a living shoreline, or expanding a river walk to increase available routes. Potential was also discussed for public space at the existing NH Fish & Game fish ladder and bridge, and to create a kayak launch on the North side of the river. Traffic configuration was also discussed at Route 108 and Gerry Ave., but that would likely be handled by a different commission. General ideas for downtown spaces for farmer's markets, music, art opportunities, and parking and EV charging were also covered by the presentation.

Zack asked what steps can be taken now to move some suggestions forward. **Sam** explained that there has been a lot of input through the process so far, but that the Riverfront Advisory Committee should not be the sole people to push the ideas forward. To move forward, speaking with other committees and commissions in town to gather their opinions on what they want to see in the area in the future; showing up in public comment, write a letter, and include the goals in the Master Plan are some ways to move ideas forward. **Ellen** added that currently they are not at the implementation stage and that there might be another entity involved to help in the future once it is realized in the Master Plan. **Colin** added that the residents at Rivermoor Landing are also a part of the conversation; **Sam** agreed and that a mutually beneficial outcome would be ideal.

Discussion ensued on the idea of a bridge to connect to Heron Point, or for creating a path through properties using easements for connection. **Jessica** commented how a bridge would make it difficult for barges and boats to pass through. **Sam** agreed that if it were to be put in, it would have to be at higher elevation. There was consensus that there is currently limited access with the current configuration. **Ellen** agreed that a trail in would be the best option, but it would be with discussion of the private landowners for easements in order to do so. There is currently an access deed for sun-up to sundown through the right of way off Meadow Drive.

Ellen also added that the deed for Heron Point has a restriction against structures being built, so there would need to be a legal interpretation on if a bridge would be considered a structure if that idea were to move forward. **Colin** added that the concept of a bridge is appealing, but in reality it is a large cost; having a walkway would be beneficial to make it a recreational area.

Joe commented that the first priority should be Moonlight Brook and fixing the culverts, but agreed that a deck to expand Schanda Park is a good idea.

Melissa urged that the extra distance to get to the Heron Point entrance shouldn't be a deterrent for those going to enjoy nature, and that more signage and wayfinding for that would help with that, and that a bridge is an unnecessary expense.

David brought up some concerns with the parking at Schanda Park and how there is no barrier to Moonlight Brook.

Cris agreed that a bridge would be inconvenient for boats and kayakers and that it would become an eyesore, take away from the appeal of Heron Point, and create more problems.

Emma agreed that although a bridge would be effective, but the cons outweigh the pros.

Zack also agreed but urged that there should be more connectivity to the area with the idea of a wraparound trail.

There was consensus to have conversations with some of the landowners that easements would be needed from in order to create a new trail to connect Heron Point.
Ellen continued to give an overview of Schanda Park, including the history of the town acquiring the land in 1982, which consisted of four parcels, and the funding sources to create the boat launch and associated parking including from Salmon Unlimited and NCDC, among others. In 2005, the Town Council gave the Conservation Commission the responsibility of maintenance and stewardship. As this is more of a park than the larger conservation lands that Conservation Commission helps steward, the question is what entity could instead be responsible for it.
Brian recommended that it could be the Riverfront Advisory Committee. **Ingrid** asked what the responsibilities are for managing and maintenance. **Sam** added it could be the Recreation Department, or Public Works, instead of a volunteer committee. **Cris** explained that the Conservation Commissions currently are the ones that receive applications for using the park. There was consensus that both Recreation and Public Works are the possible ideas for who could be responsible for maintaining it while Conservation Commission could still be involved as well.
Sam added that the Riverfront Advisory Committee is intended to have some sort of end date after the Master Plan.
Ellen concluded that Conservation Commission does not have the capacity to steward the park but that they could review the use permits, although that could also be handled by a town department.
Joe added that the Recreation Department already handles the kayak rentals at the park, as well as hosting events there. **Juli** also added that since the commission only meets monthly, it would be more effective for a department to handle the permits so that people are not waiting.
Lyndsay added that the town is working with Geosyntec Consultants to investigate the stormwater systems in Moonlight Brook, with crews collecting samples from the outfalls to work to identify any illicit discharge. This will be completed in the spring and summer of this year. This investigation is for the individual pipe networks, but not the culverts. The culverts would be a separate study, but they are starting with addressing the pollutants.
Lyndsay also commented that the Creighton Street pump station, next to Schanda Park, is where the septage receiving currently is. They are working on a new septage receiving station at the wastewater treatment plant on Youngs Lane instead so that septage haulers would no longer be going to Creighton Street. It is currently in design.
Bart agreed that for Schanda Park stewardship, it would make the most sense for a town department to handle, and possibly Town Council for the permitting side since they meet more often.
To wrap up, **Sam** recommended that everyone could take more time to review the charrette presentation and provide more input. **Joe** also added that anything done in the future would involve the Conservation Commission. There was consensus that trail connectivity and wayfinding are the main ideas to improve moving forward. It was also discussed for the Riverfront Advisory Committee to a full committee, and also encompassing downtown.
The Conservation Commission thanked the Riverfront Advisory Committee for the discussion.

5. Master Plan Discussion [time on DCAT 1:15:10]

- **Land & Water Conservation Chapter**

Bart introduced that there is a draft vision statement from SRPC, as well as draft themes and goals, to review and discuss to receive guidance and see if there are any suggested changes. The draft goals were gathered from the existing Open Space and Water Resources plans.
The vision statement was discussed first. **Juli** commented that the points taken from the Water Resources plan could be expanded on more, such as highlighting that water resources will be protected as they make the town more resilient to environmental threats, and that there is scenic value to wetlands, rivers, and streams. **Bart** and **Kyle** added that the current bulleted format is just for discussion and that it will be put into more of a narrative format for the final version. **Ellen** commented

that groundwater needs to be added; **Juli** added that buffers along water could be included as well.
Bart continued to present the draft themes and goals, with the themes being vibrancy, connectivity, accessibility, affordability, and resiliency. Changes discussed to the goals included: adding field trips as a public engagement opportunity (Vibrancy); expanding on the areas to be more than just the Lamprey River to list the habitat types (Vibrancy); adding to strengthen community engagement (Vibrancy); adding expanding trail networks to greater surrounding communities instead of just saying within town (Connectivity); adding ensuring healthy living options (Affordability).
Juli added that for the Accessibility, it should speak to not just creating accessibility, but also awareness, such as with the wayfinding. **Colin** noted that the integration and collaboration with other communities could be mentioned more.
Bart concluded that the next draft of the chapter will likely be brought to the commission in March, and also that he'll send out the Housing chapter so that they can see how it will be formatted.
Kyle summarized the changes that were discussed.

- **Recreation Chapter**

Ellen noted that the document with responses to the questionnaire for the Recreation chapter was emailed to the members for review, and that they will send it back.
Ellen also mentioned that she and **Bart** met with **Stephen** at SRPC to review a list of properties, both town owned and privately owned, to review the status regarding any recreation opportunities and in relation to opportunity for trail networks.

<u>6. Land Stewardship</u> [time on DCAT 1:43:18]

- **Heron Point boundary survey**

Ellen updated that the draft was completed and emailed out, and that she, **Bart**, and **Bridgette** are going to meet with the Heron Point Estates Cooperative president to review the encroachments on town property, the history as there was no previous baseline documentation, and moving forward with what can be done. Stake & Stones Land Surveying completed the survey. After meeting with Heron Point Estates, they will go back out and place any missing monuments and flag where all of the boundaries are. They will also get feedback on the gate and any issues that Heron Point may be experiencing.
Ellen also mentioned that the repairs to the Wiggin Farm boardwalk had to be postponed due to the cold, hopefully in early March once the ground thaws.

<u>7. Approve Meeting Minutes; Sue retiring</u> [time on DCAT 1:47:32]

- November 14, 2024

<u>Action:</u>
<u>Motion</u>: **Melissa Sharples** made a motion to approve the November 14, 2024
<u>Second</u>: **Cris Blackstone**
<u>Discussion</u>: None
<u>Vote</u>: **Unanimously Approved 7-0-0**

- December 12, 2024

<u>Action:</u>
<u>Motion</u>: **Jessica Cann** made a motion to approve the December 12, 2024
<u>Second</u>: **Zachary Angelini**
<u>Discussion</u>: None
<u>Vote</u>: **Unanimously Approved 7-0-0**

Ellen thanked **Sue** for her time and announced that she is retiring after almost 14 years! She will be at the February meeting so that the commission can thank her.
The position will be posted soon, and in the meantime, **Bridgette** will take the minutes.

8. Financial Summary [time on DCAT 1:50:56]

Ellen reported that the balance in the Conservation fund is $133,074.05, and the Schanda fund is $4,621.11, for a total of $137,695.16. This was mostly interest, and $1,500 was paid out to Stakes and Stones Surveying in December. General fund balance is $3,624.60, and the Southeast Land Trust monitoring for the three properties they monitored needs to be approved; $1,000 had previously been approved for two properties. The invoice total is $1,119.38, and the remaining balance can be taken out of the general fund.

Action:

Motion: **Juli Tyson** made a motion to approve the invoice from Southeast Land Trust for $1,119.38.
Second: **Melissa Sharples**
Discussion: None
Vote: **Unanimously Approved 7-0-0**

9. Committee/Board Reports [time on DCAT 1:52:40]

Town Council: **Brian** reported that they have not yet met this month as the last meeting was cancelled due to the agenda being empty.
Planning Board/Planning Department: **Bart** reported that they are continuing the rezoning discussions, and the focus is currently on the downtown corridor, which will take a few months. At the February meeting, the Planning Board will be reviewing the Mitchell Property's boundary line adjustments from Stakes and Stones Surveying.
Bart and **Jeff** are also still working on reviewing and updating the wetland ordinance to possibly add a setback to the buffer, which would then be reviewed by the Planning Board.
Planning Board will also be reviewing a letter of interest from Sarah Wrightsman to fill a vacancy on the SRPC Board of Commissioners.
Ellen added that Mark West will be coming to the February meeting to present the prime wetland maps. **Bart** added that the next step after Conservation Commission reviews the maps would be to go to the Planning Board, who will give their recommendation to Town Council for approval. There is also outreach to the abutters affected, likely at both the Planning Board and Town Council stages.
Energy and Environment Advisory Committee: **Juli** commented that the costs through CPC will be updated; **Bart** added that they are also working on the Master Plan chapter for Energy.
School Liaison: **Emma** reported on the Newmarket Cares Day in the beginning of May, and that they are planning spring clean-ups for some trails in town.
The 300th Newmarket Celebration: **Melissa** reported that she is no longer serving on this committee, so if anyone else is interested in being the representative. However, plans are progressing for gathering funds, creating a website, and that there is also a book being written for it.

10. Other Updates [time on DCAT 2:00:32]

Cris reported that the library has designated a corner to the Conservation Commission to the left. They are thinking that bookmarks, handouts, flyers, and informational pieces can be in that display, such as highlighting speakers for the upcoming Turtlefest and efforts at Ash Swamp Road. Any fragile items or things that shouldn't be touched can also be put behind glass. Other ideas are tick awareness, and other seasonal topics that can rotate.

Cris also noted that the first meeting of the Conservation Connection Book Club is January 23 at 6 PM for *Bicycling with Butterflies*. Februrary 27 will be *Birding to Change the World*, and March 27 will be *Of Time and Turtles*. **Ellen** added that any ideas for the library should be sent to **Cris**.
Ellen also added that the Turtlefest work group will meet again soon to continue working on planning for the event.
Zack reported that for the UNH capstone project, they have a lot of interest for their vernal pool mapping and salamander crossing brigades project, with a group focused on the GIS mapping and another group focused on the marketing and communications for the volunteers to help with the project. **Melissa** commented that the social media for conservation should be used to help get volunteers; **Zack** also added that high school students could also get involved.
Lyndsay provided an update on the Ash Swamp Road projects; the town was working with NH Fish & Game for an application for America the Beautiful Challenge, which included three other projects as well including the Ash Swamp Road culvert. Unfortunately it did not get selected to move forward, but the official decision will be received soon. Additionally, an application was submitted for the NHDES ARM (Aquatic Resource Mitigation) Fund, and it was selected by the committee, but at federal review level it got kicked back. They will be meeting to discuss some potential modifications to the applications to hopefully move it back forward. They do currently have the funding from The Nature Conservancy though, and they are moving ahead with the design; Wright-Pierce has been working on the engineering for the design. Hopefully the design can be advanced through some preliminary permitting so that it is well-vetted and ready to advance to the next step when funding is available.

11. Adjourn [time on DCAT 2:12:30]

Action:

Motion: **Melissa Sharples** made a motion to adjourn at 9:10 PM.
Second: **Cris Blackstone**
Discussion: None
Vote: **Unanimously Approved 7-0-0**

Respectfully submitted,
Bridgette Grotheer

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