

**Lancaster Conservation Commission (LCC) Meeting Minutes
Town Hall Second Floor – November 14, 2022**

LCC Members present: Racheal Stuart, Kathy-Jean Lavoie, Vickie Gibbs, Sam Mayne, Kim Votta, Troy Merner, Nancy Southworth

LCC Members Absent: none

Others present: Heidi Chester

Initial Business: Stuart called the meeting to order at 5:30pm. Introductions were waived (all attendees previously acquainted).

Approval of minutes:

Lavoie made a motion to approve the October 11, 2022 minutes as written. Mayne seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

LCC Workplan Topics:

2022 Easement Monitoring Update (Southworth/Votta)

Completed forms & information for three of six easements monitored by Southworth were presented: Town of Lancaster, Hirsey-Roth (formerly Christie), Stowell. Votta cited loss of online access which prevented upload of all six reports prior to meeting. She plans to upload the balance of easement monitoring documents (Southworth-Scobie, Southworth-Haslanger, Peaslee-Smith) as soon as able & will report on these at next meeting.

The Town was deemed compliant w/easement terms; a plan for fencing in order to prevent vehicles/interlopers beyond the building was noted, but will not proceed without approved funding. Merner noted that the town has previously applied to the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) but was rejected. The Hirsey-Roth easement monitoring posed no concerns. The Stowell monitoring cited the landowner's plan to cut some trees this winter in accordance w/terms; logistics for this & adding 10 acres to existing easement are being explored (need for plan, surveyor &/or lawyer, if new agreement must be drafted).

Mayne sought clarification on the LCC's role re: new easements. Votta stated recommending easements on the land's conservation value would be ideal, to guide a decision by the town. Stuart noted that while the town may be the decision-making body, the LCC would be responsible for stewardship/monitoring thereafter. Votta requested this discussion topic be added to agenda at a future meeting; Stuart concurred.

Votta received a letter & Forestry Management / Agricultural Reclamation Plan from Barb Smith (Peaslee-Smith easement), who requests LCC approval of her plan. Votta summarized the plan to include reclamation of 92 acres from forest to pasture for agricultural use; primarily clearcutting with buffers of trees left along waterways & in groups as shade/cover for livestock. Stuart & Southworth voiced questions regarding the process, timeline & protections along Garland Brook. Mayne read from Peaslee-Smith deed which names US Cooperative Extension as the source for recommended practices. Lavoie will scan the proposed plan for LCC member access; Votta encouraged members to read the deed & proposed plan prior to December meeting. Votta will notify Smith that her plan is under review.

Southworth sought approval of easement monitoring documents & letters for Town & Hirsey-Roth. *Gibbs made a motion to approve. Mayne seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

Potential CT River Riparian Restoration Project (Mayne)

Mayne summarized this project to restore & protect streambanks running along Lancaster Elementary School's playground & athletic fields. Initial approvals by Town Manager Ben Gaetjens-Oleson & the school board have been received, with the school requesting some apple trees as part of the plantings. Mayne presented an estimate for the functional wetlands assessment required for ARM fund application & explained two new components he'd like to include: invasive species management (knotweed/honeysuckle) & the restoration of original wetland features (mini ponds, swales etc from remnant river course). Gibbs raised concerns about child safety near water features; Stuart & Mayne assured the school will consider & address as needed. Discussion of project cost estimate for assessment & LCC's share of expenditure segued into budget discussion below.

2022 Budget (Lavoie)

Lavoie presented a report of 2022 budget & expenditures. While three categories ran minorly over-budget (Dues, Advertising, Education), approximately 60% of total funds remain. The group discussed projected 4th quarter expenses. Gibbs projected costs for Heritage Trail letters to landowners which received LCC support. Gibbs also projected need for trail signage, which Lavoie & Stuart believe may fall under Colonel Town's broader scope of recreation (noted as an inquiry for Ben Gaetjens-Oleson). Mayne asked about feasibility of breaking the CT River Riparian Restoration Project costs into progressive payments, thus encumbering remaining 2022 funds & ear-marking a portion of 2023 budget. Lavoie proposed that Mayne work with consultant (Hurley of Windenwater) to divide services into a multi-phase contract & present a Phase 1 w/cost at next meeting. Votta noted potential costs for establishing baseline conditions for two LCC-held easements. Southworth acknowledged the consent of at least two landowners, were the LCC to approve expenditure of funds. Stuart will add these items to December meeting agenda.

LCC & Planning Board Relationship (Gibbs)

Gibbs reports supportive reception when presenting LCC interests at Town Planning Board meetings. She cited existence of town ordinances for protection of water resources in the NH towns of Bethlehem, Randolph & Concord. Votta stated that the town's Master Plan may establish a level of town priority but doesn't necessarily promote regulations. Several members felt Town Land Use Coordinator Robin Irving should be consulted. Stuart summarized group discussion on the development of regulatory protection as: LCC recommendation to Planning Board to Town to the voting public. Merner stated that reminding boards, administrators & citizens that Lancaster is surrounded by water and wetlands on all sides may be a helpful tool in support of water resource protection. Lavoie & Merner will approach Ben re: the LCC beginning to work w/Robin in order to put forth a proposal.

Gaia/ONX mapping software (Stuart)

Stuart asked members to discuss whether the purchase of GPS mapping software (such as onX or Gaia) would provide worthwhile support to LCC workplan efficiency. She estimated cost as \$30-40 per yearly subscription. Lavoie stated an app showing parcels w/landowner names would expedite obtaining contact information for correspondence in her work w/invasive species plotting. Mayne affirmed that named parcels are time-saving & well worth the expenditure. Gibbs stated she personally subscribes to a GPS app & finds it useful while afield as she attempts to relocate the Heritage Trail. Lavoie said she'd think about whether to move forward with the idea for the Knotweed work.

After each report Stuart thanked the presenting member, commending the number of projects & ongoing progress made despite meeting length. She noted December's meeting is likely to host an equally full agenda.

Other business: Stuart opened the floor to other business; none presented.

Lavoie moved to adjourn; Merner seconded. The motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 7:24pm.

Respectfully submitted, Heidi Chester

Approved December 12, 2022

Racheal Stuart, Chair

Kim Votta, Vice Chair