

**Lancaster Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Town Hall Second Floor – September 12, 2022**

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

Members Absent: Nancy Southworth

Others present:

Initial Business: Stuart called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Approval of minutes:

Lavoie made a motion to approve the August 8, 2022 minutes as written. Votta seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

New Business:

Stuart presented a letter to the Town from Donald Muise seeking thoughts on how to dispose of Holton Island (Tax Map R04, Lot 27) in the Connecticut River. Ben Gaetjens-Oleson is interested in accepting a donation of the parcel as a town-owned property and has heard back from Mr. Muise that he is willing to discuss that. Ben is seeking input from the LCC. Specifically, Ben is interested in whether the LCC would develop a stewardship plan for the island if it is accepted by the Town. It was noted that the parcel, and that oxbow area of the river in general, is valuable for wildlife and fish habitat, particularly for migratory birds. If accepted by the Town, the LCC is willing to develop a stewardship plan and provide stewardship going forward. It was suggested that while a stewardship plan may focus primarily on protecting the wildlife values, we should not rule out potential compatible educational and recreational activities, given the island's proximity to the elementary school. Next steps for LCC would be to work with Ben to clarify in writing what the stewardship role for LCC will be. In addition, LCC members agreed it would be good to clarify the commission's stewardship role related to the Town Forest; including stewardship activities requiring decisions by the Selectboard.

LCC Workplan Topics:

Report on CISMA/Knotweed Project

Lavoie updated the commission on the completion of the mesh demonstration site at the transfer station, and completion of herbicide application in key Rights-of-Way out east. She reminded members that our partnership with UC-CISMA enabled them to provide one day of contracted services by a professional applicator. She acknowledged the support of the Town's Highway Department in locating and prioritizing how to make the most use of the opportunity and noted that several landowners had also given permission to apply the herbicide beyond the ROW where bigger knotweed patches exist. She noted that the areas treated this year will need to be re-treated in 2023. Depending on landowner interest and budget, LCC may be able to expand the application to address additional areas, including those on or near important streams and wetlands.

ARM Fund Application Update

Stuart reported that she had communicated with ARM fund contacts and partners to let them know we would not move the Town Forest easement project forward in 2022. Partners were understanding and supportive. DES ARM Fund contact Lori Sommer suggested she come up to Lancaster in October to look at other potential projects with us. Mayne reported out on a potential riparian restoration project he was exploring in conjunction with the Lancaster Middle School. Specifically, there is significant erosion on the bank of the Connecticut River at the Middle School property on Bridge Street. This could be addressed with tree planting. He is in conversation with Rob Scott at SAU 36 who is

interested in concept but needs more information. They will continue their conversation later in September. Mayne noted it would be an ambitious project and could potentially use all of the available ARM funds. LCC members expressed enthusiasm for the riparian restoration project and encouraged Mayne to continue.

Votta inquired about the status of the Town Forest easement concept and potential trails development. Stuart responded that the easement concept is not out of the picture but there is not funding application in the works at this time. She feels a program of community education is the next step, and she has asked two potential vendors to give us an estimate on basic skid road stabilization so that we can potentially conduct public site visits to the property. She noted she is continuing to work with the Northern Forest Center on the Trails committee. Mayne reported that he would not be able to continue on that committee; Gibbs expressed interest in taking Mayne's position on the committee. Stuart will reach out to Julie Renaud Evans to suggest this. Mayne, Gibbs and Stuart will meet to transfer Heritage Trail files and intel.

Fall 2023 Easement Monitoring

Votta presented a detailed plan for the 2022 monitoring of LCC-held conservation easements, beginning with landowner outreach in September and finalizing reports by mid-December. In addition, as recommended by the State Conservation Land Stewardship Program, the LCC team will identify one property on which to establish current conditions to serve as a baseline for monitoring in the future. They will also select one property on which to identify and monument inholding boundaries. Votta noted that the team will review landowner communications related to the 2021 monitoring, and factor these into follow up communications and the 2022 monitoring. She will notify LCC members of site visit dates once they are set so that other commission members can participate in at least one easement monitoring.

D142 Line

Stuart noted letter of completion provided by Eversource. She reported that she had communicated with Eversource reps about our interest in accompanying their environmental monitors on one of more follow-up walks. Votta suggested we clarify how long they are required to do this and ask them for a final letter once they have done their final site visit.

Appointment of Clerk

Stuart reported that Heidi Chester had agreed to take the role of LCC Clerk, beginning in October. *Lavoie made a motion to recommend Heidi Chester as LCC Clerk to the Selectboard. Votta seconded. Motion carried unanimously.* Stuart will work with Ben Gaetjens-Oleson to bring the recommendation forward to the Selectboard for their consideration and approval.

Treasurers report-2022 budget update

Lavoie presented the budget. Stuart asked about the proposed use of the NRI line item (\$2,500). Lavoie noted that this was related to the ARM Fund application we will either need to re-allocate it or encumber it for 2023. Several members of the Committee noted the Holton Island stewardship plan would benefit from an ecological study. Stuart agreed to get some estimates to allocate or encumber funds by the end of the year.

Master Plan Committee Report

Votta reported that Ben Gaetjens-Olsen is working with the committee to have a draft report by the end of the calendar year. This draft would be circulated in January for input by various boards and commissions. LCC is identified in a number of chapters, and this would be our opportunity to provide input. Stuart noted there are some recommendations we may want to get to Ben in advance. It was suggested that LCC make sure that appropriate chapters reference recent studies such as the NRI, Wetlands Assessment and (to be completed 1 November) Ecological Assessment.

Selectboard Report

Lavoie asked Merner about the status of the Town Wide Cleanup project. She noted that a member of the public had raised this at a previous Selectboard meeting. Merner said that the cleanup day had not happened in 2022 and Brian Patnoe would be working on this in 2023.

Other business:

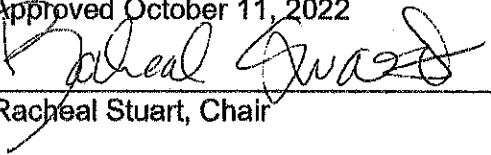
Stuart presented bids for printing of the report on the Fairgrounds and Page Hill Wetlands Functional Assessment by Elise Lawson. She presented a general plan to distribute the report to other town boards and committees, Library, members of the public and adjacent landowners.

Lavoie made a motion to allocate \$647 from LCC Budget education line item to print 50 copies of the "Functional Assessment of Wetlands Throughout the Northumberland Tributaries Subwatershed and Headwater Area of the Otter Brook Subwatershed Lancaster, NH". Mayne seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

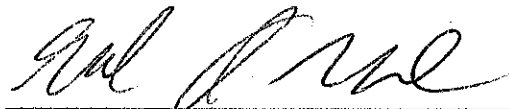
Noting that there was no further business to discuss, *Merner made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:59 pm. Gibbs seconded. The motion carried unanimously.*

Respectfully submitted, Racheal Stuart

Approved October 11, 2022



Racheal Stuart, Chair



Kim Votta, Vice Chair
Sam Mayne