



**CONSERVATION COMMISSION**  
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**MINUTES OF THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

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Wednesday, February 09, 2022 – 6:30 p.m. – Town Hall Conference Room

Members Present: Laura Byergo, Joe Fedora, Brad Lajoie, Lloyd Ziel

Members Absent: Bill Bilodeau

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Chair Byergo opened the Conservation Commission meeting at 6:35 p.m. Attendance was taken and it was announced a quorum was present and the meeting was being recorded. L. Byergo noted two guests were present. One guest, Kathleen Babin-Johnson, is a 2018 Natural Resources student graduate was interested in joining the Conservation Commission. L. Byergo explained there were openings for two members and one alternate.

1. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: L. Ziel moved to approve the minutes of Wednesday, November 10, 2021. Second – J. Fedora; three in favor, one abstained (B. Lajoie). MOTION CARRIED

MOTION: J. Fedora moved to approve the minutes of Wednesday, December 08, 2021. Second – B. Lajoie; all in favor. MOTION CARRIED

2. Development Proposal Updates

Tower Place is scheduled to be heard at the Planning Board meeting on Thursday, February 17, 2022. L. Byergo requested that a Conservation Commission member be present at that meeting to see their new and revised plans. Mercedes-Benz, 309 Portsmouth Avenue, will not be heard on Thursday, February 17<sup>th</sup>. The Conservation Commission had sent a letter to DES regarding the Mercedes-Benz expansion. DES sent a letter to Mercedes-Benz about the lot being in the wetland buffer and is requesting they do something more.

3. Plans, Goals, Ideas for 2022

L. Byergo stated the Conservation Commission would get their requested increase in the warrant article. The Budget Committee and Board of Selectmen supported that warrant article. If the voters approve the warrant article, it will be for three years. The Conservation Commission will have the funds they need to do a new Natural Resources Inventory which would be an outreach project that is professionally mediated to the residents of Greenland. It would be a professional review of the natural resources in Greenland and what is happening on the Winnicut River and with conservation land. Parcels that are monitored by the Commission will also be looked at. B. Lajoie asked about the threat of future development and would that be included. L. Byergo responded it would be part of it. She explained their primary goal was to ask 'where are we right now?' and to provide the Town with ideas and

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management goals. It will give members and the public the opportunity to ask questions they may have about sea level rise, salt marshes, the fish ladder under the Winnicut River Bridge, protecting the land from development, etc. L. Byergo stated she would like to talk to someone about how it affects a town's psyche when there is increased density. If increased density is to protect land and there is not an easement, is it really protected? J. Fedora asked if findings would be presented in a public forum at the Town Hall, School or Library, so people would be aware of the information. L. Byergo responded there would be at least one day for a charette—people would be brought together in one location; there would be a series of exercises and questions to involve residents. Conservation Commission members received an email that explained the process for the Natural Resources Inventory and working with residents to inform them and look for their priorities.

The Conservation Commission warrant article was discussed. The amount of the three-year non-lapsing warrant article is \$17,600; \$8,000 would be set aside for the Natural Resources Inventory. Warrant article funds can also be used for trail maintenance, research, and public outreach. The expense for the intern has been moved to the Town budget for the Conservation Commission.

L. Byergo asked if there were specific goals members would like to see accomplished this year. L. Byergo also mentioned that her term expired in March and she will have served five years as the chairman. The by-laws state that an individual cannot serve more than five years as the chairman. L. Byergo stated she was inclined to request re-appointment but does not wish to continue as the chairman. Reorganization will take place at the March meeting.

Several projects were suggested: seedlings, wildlife corridors, Peter Steckler could speak to members and residents about the work that has been done to identify the wildlife corridors, etc. L. Byergo stated there is a lot the Commission can do and asked what they wanted to do and what were the priorities. J. Fedora noted that one priority should be clearing out stuff that had been dumped in the conservation areas. B. Lajoie supported that goal and noted Thompson Brook in particular. He has cleaned up items while out hunting, but it will require a team for the heavy lifting. Members also discussed the 500-gallon drum that needs to be removed from land adjacent to the Town recreation fields.

Several months ago, L. Ziel suggested a working group to set Conservation Commission priorities. He presented a list of projects that could be done by the membership as outreach. He questioned how many people are accessing the Thompson Brook area and if it was a flagship property. There was the possibility of trails at Great Bay Farm; B. Lajoie mentioned the Weeks Trail. L. Ziel suggested asking other Boards for their feedback or if there were other conservation issues that should be addressed.

J. Fedora stated he is always looking to see if there is anyone parked at the trailhead. Most of the time, there are vehicles there. It does not appear to be heavily utilized. L. Ziel noted that it would be nice to have data available to give to the Selectmen indicating how many people are using the various sites and their value. L. Byergo noted that the Conservation Commission has done two surveys with residents over the years; there was not a huge response. The Planning Board also did a survey. Data from those surveys may be helpful and will forward that information to L. Ziel.

A Selectman appointed as a liaison was discussed. L. Byergo stated that the Conservation Commission could ask the Board of Selectmen for a liaison. She added that it could work but their tighter relationship was with the Planning Board. L. Byergo and J. Fedora attend Planning Board meetings to show that the Conservation Commission was interested in working with that Board. L. Byergo stated that communication with the Planning Board and the Board of Selectmen was very important. It was the Commission's role use their background and their contacts with the wider environmental resources

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that are available to develop their own goals. L. Byergo added that the Commission's recommendations were important to other Boards. She continued that she used the Natural Resources Inventory as her guide when appointed chair, and recommended members be familiar with the last one.

L. Byergo noted that an outreach program has been done in early spring (example: tree seedlings). Matt Tarr, UNH Professor, has given L. Byergo the name of a former student who is interested in an intern position this summer. L. Byergo recommended UNH be contacted in February or March about the summer intern position. April, May, or June there should be an outreach project and/or cleanup. June through September would be easement monitoring with the intern.

L. Byergo updated members that some of the warrant funding may have to be used to hire the Town Engineers to do survey work on the easements in Falls Way. She explained that the OnX app was very good at keeping her and last summer's intern on parcel perimeters. However, when there is a conservation easement boundary within a privately owned parcel, the tracking no longer works. The metes and bounds of the parcels entered by the surveyors need to be understood. B. Lajoie and L. Byergo noted that the conservation markers in Falls Way need to be reinforced.

L. Byergo noted that the Conservation Commission would not need to be as involved in the budget process this year. The past year involved the warrant article and increasing the Conservation Commission budget. The budget process usually starts in October and runs through December. There is no set schedule for reviewing wetland permits or proposed developments before the Planning Board that involve wetlands.

L. Ziel questioned wildlife corridor work and mentioned that residents have asked about a summer event similar to last fall. L. Byergo stated that because of the work done by members last year, they are set up with materials to do more outreach if they choose. The Conservation Commission could work with the school and do a fall scavenger hunt.

J. Fedora: Stated it was great to set goals but they also needed to be realistic. There is quite a bit of work involved in what the Commission has discussed. He suggested members be realistic when setting goals and what can be accomplished. L. Byergo stated they had only received one quote from RPC to do the Natural Resources Inventory and suggested that they get one more quote from the private sector. L. Byergo suggested focusing on the NRI as a public outreach and doing some of the easement and cleanup work this year and then plan for more next year; the warrant article is for three years and is non-lapsing. L. Byergo told members the existing NRI will be the guideline for the new one.

L. Ziel asked if there was anything the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions could do for the Town. There are resources and funding that may be available. L. Byergo explained that their main goal is provide technical advise and training. L. Byergo advocates that members attend their annual conference. It is one of the best training opportunities for anyone who wants to serve on a Conservation Commission. It is a one-day conference, jam-packed with workshops. L. Ziel noted there is also a NH Conservation District that works mainly with farmers and landowners who are looking to conserve their soil. They do soil studies and how to mitigate runoff and nitrogen content, etc. L. Byergo suggested they may help the Conservation Commission with land management. They would have to be paid.

L. Byergo stated that items on the Commission's calendar can be moved. Members may not want to do a spring outreach and focus on the NRI. A charrette and public outreach could be done around the NRI.

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J. Fedora suggested it may be better to hold on the NRI while the Commission was in transition from L. Byergo to a new chairman.

B. Lajoie stated that the cleanup should only take a day or two with volunteers. He recommended it be done in May. Cleanup would include the tank in the area behind Maloney Field. There was a discussion about which trails would need maintenance. L. Byergo stated there were two deer blinds that needed to be tagged for removal. One was in the salt marsh area and the other is on Valhalla. Deer blinds on State property must be removed by January 31<sup>st</sup>.

J. Fedora has spoken to Chris Peter, Great Bay Discovery Center, about the tide marker at the end of Tide Mill Road. J. Fedora wanted to find a way to make that project and the issue of sea level rise more visible to residents and Boards. He asked C. Peter if it would be possible to move the King Tide marker or put another one at the Discovery Center. J. Fedora took pictures of the marker on Tide Mill Road on January 17<sup>th</sup> after storm. The water level at high tide was up to the sign. J. Fedora stated it was approximately 14 inches higher than when L. Byergo and B. Bilodeau added the red marker in 2018. L. Byergo added that the bottom of the sign on the marker was approximately 4 feet above the salt marsh. According to a newsletter from Great Bay Discovery Center, sea level rise has gone up 1.3 inches since the mid-90's, for a total of approximately 4 inches over the past decade. J. Fedora noted that on January 17<sup>th</sup> that was not a high tide that was predicted.

#### 4. Other Business

L. Ziel updated members that at the Rockingham County Conservation District meeting last week, the District wrote a letter to the Governor to ask him to veto the house bill that would give the State control of guns and knives on public property. This would include conservation easements and school district land. Any ordinance would become null and void if this passed (the State takes precedence). L. Byergo suggested L. Ziel contact Dennis Malloy, NH State Representative. The bill has passed both houses.

L. Byergo updated members that there are a series of bills coming up that are positive towards Conservation Commissions and their work. That email has been forwarded to members for review. L. Byergo stated that the Conservation Commission has not done advocacy and is not sure the group was equipped to take a stance. The Commission has the ability to advocate within the Town if they felt something was going to be harmful. It could be on the Commission's Facebook page and the Commission could take a position.

There was a brief discussion about the status of the Rail Trail. L. Byergo suggested inviting different speakers to the Conservation Commission for updates on various projects, including the Rail Trail.

#### 5. Adjournment

MOTION: L. Ziel moved to adjourn at 8:13 p.m. Second – B. Lajoie; all in favor. MOTION CARRIED

#### NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, March 09, 2022 – 6:30 p.m., Town Hall Conference Room

Submitted By: Charlotte Hussey, Administrative Assistant