Lancaster Conservation Commission (LCC) Meeting Minutes
Town Hall Second Floor – August 14, 2023

LCC Members present: Sam Mayne, Kathy-Jean Lavoie, Nancy Southworth, Vickie Gibbs

LCC Members absent: Kim Votta, Leon Rideout

Others present: Heidi Chester, Racheal Stuart, Micheal Nadeau, Kate Hartnett

Initial Business: Mayne called the meeting to order at 5:39 pm; roll call followed.

Approval of minutes:
Lavoie made a motion to approve the June 12, 2023 minutes as written. Gibbs seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Ongoing Business / LCC Workplan Topics:

Weeks Public Library/NH Humanities Council (NHHC) Partnership Project
Stuart presented current details of "The Bear" program with Weeks Public Library. A two-part event will take place. First, a discussion of "The Bear", a book by NH author Andrew Krivak, facilitated by NHHC on October 1; second, a presentation on bears in the North Country by NH Fish & Game (NHFG) Bear Biologist Andrew Timmons sponsored by the LCC on October 18. Stuart appealed to members for feedback, event participation & help with outreach. Stuart will submit a Resident's Notice on behalf of LCC. She noted no fee for NHFG, suggesting a modest donation toward their non-game species program in appreciation. Lavoie confirmed funds are available in this year's Education segment of budget.

Mayne made a motion to issue a $50 donation to NH Fish & Game Non-Game Species Program. Gibbs seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Town Forest/Heritage Trail Update
Stuart has been attending Trails Committee meetings. She reported on the current status of trail planning; an outline & maps were provided to aid members in review of progress & for understanding of options requiring decisions. Members discussed access routes from Village & options for permanent passage thru key tracts of land along trail (land donation, bargain sale, easement etc.) Stuart said only a few landowner permissions remain pending but the Page Hill access route has achieved landowner clearance & since it's a clear path, volunteer cleanup is set for Sept/Oct.

On the question of the diversion at Route 2, with options being current path/woods or Rte. 2/Pleasant St., members decided both options are agreeable, provided all permissions are secured. Signage for downtown was desirable, with potential map at covered bridge or along Rte. 2. Regarding the questions of passage thru Hinkley parcel (existing trail in use for generations, but no official permission on record), the LCC chose to defer to Trails Committee, then revisit status in October. Regarding Village access route Sand St. versus south edge of cemetery, the LCC agreed to defer to the Trails Committee & the Cemetery Trustees to choose preferred route.

Riparian Restoration Project (Mayne)
Mayne reported a positive response from DES but said they want assurance of permanent protection of the completed restoration. Mayne stated a conservation easement or restrictive covenant are possible solutions; he said the ARM Fund could potentially cover the legal cost. Mayne composed a letter of intent for protection which he plans to take before the school board for approval this week.

2023 Easement Monitoring (Mayne/Southworth)
Mayne reported easement monitoring began August 5, with completion scheduled for August 19. Southworth reported contact from a landowner who wishes to put more land into conservation; she plans to meet with him as soon as their schedules allow. Hartnett noted the importance of clarifying inholding boundaries on current easements. Southworth reported the monitoring team has searched, but was unable to locate inholding boundary markers on any but the Southworth/Haslanger easement. While Mayne & Lavoie agreed on the importance of boundary identification, the expense of a survey was found to be prohibitive. Hartnett expressed concern about whether bird strikes on the observation window of a shed were being monitored. Mayne noted that LCC had suggested mitigation and monitoring for bird strikes, but cited LCC's previous decision that because prior approval had been granted for construction, it was not reasonable to require mitigation after the fact.

Knotweed Mitigation (Lavoie)
Lavoie reported 2023 treatments are set for August 28 & 29. A professional contractor has been hired. Last year's locations will be resprayed as planned; more locations have been identified; permission packets were sent out. Total of 30 landowners participating this year, with expectation of even more next year. New town properties to be treated include the septic field, sand pit & transfer station. The spray route is being finalized. Lavoie said Tim Brown of the Highway Department, Town Manager Ben Gaetjens-Oleson & CISMA have all been a huge help in making this project happen.

LCC Membership Leadership & New Member Recruitment
Rotation of current members acting as Chairperson will continue until a new Chairperson can be instated. Gibbs committed to acting as Chairperson for September meeting. Mayne suggested moving October meeting to Tuesday October 10, from Monday October 9 (Columbus Day). Chester will poll LCC members by email this week to determine likelihood of quorum for Sept/Oct meetings.

Other Business:

Treasurer's Update on 2023 LCC Budget (Lavoie)
Lavoie reported 92% of 2023 Budget remains, less the $50 NHFG donation just approved at this meeting.

Lavoie let members know that the Selectboard recently adopted rules of procedure (RoP), and that LCC adopted their own RoP in 2019 and revised in 2021. The document can be found in the Google Drive folder. She encouraged all LCC members to review the document and if have any questions or want to discuss, to place on next month's meeting agenda.

No further business offered.

Gibbs moved to adjourn; Southworth seconded. The motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 7:11 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Heidi Chester

Approved October 10, 2023

Kim Votta, Vice Chair

Kathy-Jean Lavoie, Treasurer