Lancaster Conservation Commission (LCC) Meeting Minutes
Town Hall Second Floor – October 10, 2023

LCC Members present: Kathy-Jean Lavoie, Nancy Southworth, Kim Votta, Sam Mayne, Leon Rideout

LCC Members absent: Vickie Gibbs

Others present: Robin Irving, Annie Gould, Ray Berthiaume, Micheal Nadeau, Leah Hart, Heidi Chester

Initial Business: Lavoie called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm; roll call & introductions followed.

Approval of minutes:
Rideout made a motion to approve the August 14, 2023, as edited since initial drafting. Mayne seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Ongoing Business / LCC Workplan Topics:

2023 Easement Monitoring (Votta/Mayne/Southworth)
Votta reported easement monitoring was completed in August as planned; Mayne had linked members to the Drive folder containing all completed reports & landowner letters for review prior to meeting.

On the Southworth-Scobie site, Votta reported compliance with no new concerns. Prior concerns regarding the ambiguity of inholding boundaries & bird strikes on the observation shed window were revisited by Lavoie; Votta agreed to add a note to the report stating that a well-defined inholding boundary will become necessary if future concerns arise. She said the landowners are aware they are to continue self-monitoring for bird strikes.

On the Christie-Hirsey site, Votta reported compliance with only one new concern: the discovery of invasive species on site. The landowner was advised of this, with the recommendation to manage/eradicate & with LCC willingness to support this effort.

On the Smith-Peaslee site, Mayne reported in good standing with easement after thorough discussion with landowner & consultation with UNH Cooperative Extension regarding definition of “best management practices” (BMPs) for pasturing of livestock, as stated in the easement. Following a site visit, UNH Extension Field Specialist Ray Berthiaume provided a detailed letter affirming that this landowner’s current practices fall well within BMP standards. Mayne & other members thanked Berthiaume for his assistance in clarifying this matter. Mayne noted one area where livestock could access the watershed upstream of town water supply; the landowner has agreed to reroute some fencing to prohibit this.

On the Southworth-Haslinger site, Mayne reported nothing new; property found as intended by easement.

On the Stowell site, Southworth reported all in keeping with the intent of easement. Trees (20) had been cut per landowner’s prior plan; she said the job was complete & appeared well done. She said there may have been evidence of ash borers; Berthiaume will investigate this. The landowner asked again about putting another 10 acres under conservation; she reminded him that the town was willing to hold the easement, but he would be responsible for the legal fees, as there’s no LCC funding for such. The landowner shared concerns about increasing acidity of Martin Meadow Pond (MMP);

Southworth told him the MMP Association is welcome to come & present these concerns to the LCC. Rideout stated the town & private donations funded the renewal of the dam at MMP a few years ago; it was unclear if water sample testing was done at that time, either before or after the restoration. Mayne stated lay monitoring of water quality is an option. Berthiaume & Lavoie will look into this matter.

On the Town Water Supply site, Southworth reported compliance with no changes but noted lack of fencing to restrict access, as discussed last year. Irving reported several attempts to garner grant funding but applications have been deemed ineligible thus far, with fencing seen as protecting the water plant not the water source. Asking for a budget inclusion for the fencing is a consideration. Irving also mentioned a possible utility easement for a water storage tank to be located near water plant but at lower elevation; this is still in early planning phase.

Lavoie made a motion to approve all reports & letters as presented, with noted changes. Mayne seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Riparian Restoration Project (Mayne)

Mayne reported a site visit set for October 11 at Lancaster Elementary School (LES) with NHDES & other partners to discuss the Aquatic Resource Mitigation (ARM) Fund proposal. Mayne said there may be funding available from the US Fish & Wildlife Service to cover further project design services, contractors & invasives removal. He's also applying to the State Conservation Committee's Conservation Grant Program ("moose plates" grant).

Votta made a motion to approve the Aquatic Resource Mitigation Fund application to support the LCC's Riparian Restoration Project; Southworth seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Votta made a motion to approve LCC Member Sam Mayne as authorized representative to submit the Aquatic Resource Mitigation Fund application; Southworth seconded. Votta, Lavoie & Southworth voted in favor; Mayne abstained. The motion carried.

Southworth made a motion to designate the LCC Vice Chairperson as certified officer for the Aquatic Resource Mitigation Fund grant, if awarded. Lavoie seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Votta made a motion to approve the State Conservation Committee's Conservation Grant Program application to support the LCC's Riparian Restoration Project; Southworth seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Votta made a motion to approve LCC Member Sam Mayne as authorized representative to submit the State Conservation Committee's Conservation Grant Program application; Southworth seconded. Votta, Lavoie & Southworth voted in favor; Mayne abstained. The motion carried.

Southworth made a motion to designate the LCC Vice Chairperson as certified officer for the State Conservation Committee's Conservation Grant Program grant, if awarded. Mayne seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Mayne reported connecting with the Town of Lancaster's Connecticut River Joint Commissioner Rob Christie on this project. Lavoie reminded members of the comment period on this project as set by US Corps of Engineers public notice posted yesterday.

Knotweed Mitigation (Lavoie)

Lavoie shared a bar graph showing knotweed control efforts in 2022 & 2023. She noted two days of spraying in 2023 as opposed to only one day in 2022, with 3 of 4 sectors showing far greater than 50% increase in the number of locations receiving treatment. She noted Landowner Properties for

greatest degree of program expansion, attributing this to word-of-mouth & the high visibility of successfully eradicated knotweed since last year. With continued support of CISMA & private donors, Lavoie hopes for further program expansion next year & possibly three days of contracted spraying.

Town Forest/Heritage Trail Work Days
Votta reported the October 21 trail work date has been cancelled, but the October 14 trail work date is set to take place. She said preregistered turnout looks good, but Racheal Stuart has requested at least one LCC member be present if possible. Lavoie reported that Shane Beattie has contacted her to assure there are no discrepancies with stewardship plan regarding snowmobile trail maintenance (previously approved).

LCC Membership Leadership & New Member Recruitment
Rotation of current members acting as Chairperson will continue. Votta is unable to attend November 13 meeting; Southworth will consider acting as Chairperson but needs to check her schedule. As quorum for November appears questionable, Chester will poll LCC members by email next week to predict likelihood of quorum for Nov/Dec meetings.

Other Business:

2024 Budget Proposal (Lavoie)
Lavoie shared a spreadsheet comparison of budget & actual expenditures for 2021-2023, alongside a Proposed 2024 Budget. With only 11% of 2023's budget spent, she suggested cuts for 2024 & encouraged discussion. She asked if members could foresee any expenses before end of year or any projects which may require encumbering funds. Mayne said he may request a portion of existing 2023 budget be spent on invasive species removal on the Riparian Restoration Project before end of year, but first needs to consult the contractor regarding feasibility. Otherwise, no large expenses or encumbrances were anticipated.

Votta made a motion to approve 2024 Budget Proposal as written; Southworth seconded. The motion carried unanimously

Irving stated she's been managing parts of town website which pertain to land use. She has posted some new images & has offered to upload LCC minutes as approved.

Chester announced she will discontinue clerking for LCC meetings effective December 31, 2023. Committee expressed heartfelt gratitude for Chester's efforts during her time as LCC Clerk.

Votta reminded members of the presentation on bears in the North Country by NH Fish & Game (NHFG) Bear Biologist Andrew Timmons on October 18. This is the second part of the Weeks Public Library/NH Humanities Council (NHHC) Partnership Project & is sponsored by the LCC.

No further business offered.

Mayne moved to adjourn; Southworth seconded. The motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 6:33 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Heidi Chester

Approved November 11, 2023

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Kathy-Jean Lavoie, Treasurer Sam Mayne, Member