Lancaster Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Monday, June 9, 2025
25 Main Street, Lancaster NH auditorium

Board members present: Nancy Southworth, Vickie Gibbs, Sam Mayne (after presentation)
Others present: Robin Irving-Land Use Coordinator, Ammonoosuc Conservation Trust Executive Director Rosalind Page, Ammonoosuc Conservation Trust Conservation Project Manager Rick Walling, Ammonoosuc Conservation Trust Trustee (Stewartstown)/Lands Committee Member E.H. Roy, Resident Fletcher Manning, Resident Harriet Beattie, Resident Brian Beattie

Presentation started at 1730H

Ammonoosuc Conservation Trust "ACT" representatives were present to discuss the steps necessary to possibly have a conservation easement on public lands known as the Lancaster Town Forest; residents were present to get information on how to have a conservation easement on their private lands.

All lands must be evaluated for 'conservation value.' The term value has more to do with serving the public good than it does with financial value although conservation value has financial value. The evaluation involves some physical inspection and mapping analysis to determine 5 criteria: quality of water, habitat, soils, agriculture, and open space. Because the imposition of a conservation easement on public lands MUST be presented to the legislative body as a warrant, this vetting of property should be completed pre-warrant. When crafting the easement language, there is a difference between reserved and restricted rights. Restrictions make non-permissive designated activities etc. while reservations are essentially options to be executed later. For example, a reservation for recreational trails or timber harvest subject to ACT's approval, or carving out and reserving a portion of a parcel for potential development. The Town Forest possibly, by virtue of being adopted as a town forest, may be already restricted so both the RSA and minutes should be reviewed by town counsel. There are different ways to provide the land anticipated for easement: 1) Donation easement, based on restrictive rights in order to get monetary value payment AND if donated to an NPO, it can be a charitable deduction; and 2) bargain-sale whereby some portion of the appraisal is reduced (if want 100% value, this will likely not be approved for easement, but if 20% of appraisal is reduced, then it is a bargain sale with better chances of being approved). Straight sale minus value with restrictions on the land equals the easement value. There are 3 pots of money to be considered and balanced: 1) the amount a property owner wants to get paid, 2) costs for boundary survey, legal review and title search, and possibly Phase I environmental study, and 3) long-term stewardship costs. The goal is to attain 4% return. Once approved, the easement can provide an extra level of protection. No structures can be situated on the property unless it is a farm. *De minimus* commercial activity is permissible. Parking areas and community gardens are permissible. Adjacent property with

abutting conserved properties provides connectivity which has conservation value. Viewshed easements are not the same as conservation value of a view. It is not clear whether a town can be its own easement holder because typically the easement holder must be accredited.
ACT is looking for Coos County participants especially if interested in active easement monitoring.

Sam Mayne joined the group at 1834H—QUORUM

Members discussed the condition of the trails. Page Hill side of the town trail is in bad shape and needs a couple more bog bridges. JAG will be working on the trail at the end of June and AMC will be working in July.

There was no vote to recommend Jordan Garrett to the Commission; the members decided to wait until her schedule opened up and she expressed a clear commitment.

Vickie Gibbs moved to adjourn at 1914H. Nancy Southworth seconded the motion, none opposed. The motion passed unanimously.

By:_____
Robin L. Irving, Land Use Coordinator for the Lancaster Conservation Commission

Approval Date: 7/9/2025