

Litchfield Conservation Commission
February 4, 2021
Litchfield Town Hall, 2 Liberty Way

Minutes approved on 3/4/2021

In attendance: Joan McKibben, Tom Levesque, Roger St. Laurent, Matt Lepore, Michael Croteau, Steve Webber, Harry Menzigan, Marion Godzik (alternate), Andrew Thompson (alternate), Dianne Plansky (alternate).

Members absent: John Curtin

(7:00) Joan calls the meeting to order in the large conference room. No public comments.

(7:01) Theroux Site, proposed gas station and self storage units, 522 CBH. Update to wetland buffer impacts. Michael Croteau abstained from conversation. Site walk was conducted on January 9, 2021 with members of the conservation commission (CC) with the property owner and his engineer. Two items came up during that walk. One was the impacts to the wetland buffer from the access road to the self storage units. From that a new design was created and a ~5% reduction of impacts was obtained. Second item was the relocation of the outlet for the stormwater area to Leach Brook. Roger asks if the facility will be a no salt area. This will be brought up again at the zoning board with further details for a no salt or limited salt plan. Joan asks what catchment basins will be there. There are 2 planned. Tom motions to write a letter of support to the zoning board. Harry seconds and the vote is 6-0-1.

(7:16) Litchfield Trail Group (LTG), Robert Terry presentation. A powerpoint presentation is presented and will be available to the CC. The LTG is an independent group of citizens with 35 members and 3 groups. Robert presents about the closed Litchfield State Forest trails "Calvin Loop" and "Twin Bridge". He had a conversation with state forester William Kunelius on why the trails were closed. The group will be looking for a legal way to re-open trails or the creation of new trails within the state forest. There is support from the Litchfield BOS.

(7:30) William Kunelius, NH State Forester. He introduces Scott Rolfe and Jim Oehler. Scott is Regional Forester, Jim is with NH Fish and Game. They present the purpose of the state forests. They are state reservations with the purpose of providing habitat for biological diverse populations. A sustainable source of forest products. Mitigation of climate change. A place for recreation. They describe how its a multiuse management of state reservations. William K. took a look at the property in early 2020. He noticed rogue trails within the forest. He noticed that a bench was placed by a wetland which is not typical to have in state forests. He was then contacted by the Litchfield CC to help with access to the towns trail system through the state forest. It was agreed that the use of the state forest trails would be able to be used to

help with the access to the adjacent town trails. During the summer of 2020 William went back to survey the state forest and found additional rouge trails created from the time he first went in early 2020. The rouge trails were closed in the winter of 2020. There was signage added and an explanation of why the trails were being closed. They were closed by a method called hinge cutting of small trees and shrubs.

Jim O. talked about the fish and game involvement of state land management. He mentions that recreational impacts of wildlife regardless of type, there is a negative impact to wildlife from it. He provides a look at how to reduce impacts and shows an online tool that the F&G created, "Trails for People and Wildlife". It looks at 5 key principles of reducing impacts. There is a corridor of influence where depending on the species it can be 150ft or up to 400ft. This corridor is one of the factors for closing the calvine loop trail. It reduced impacts up to 51%. Marion asks what is the recovery time for wildlife after a trail closure. Jim says it depends on the species and it can take years for them to recover lost habitat. Harry makes a comment that there seems to be less animal activity at Moores Falls since the increase in human activity during the past year. Dianne asks when was the last time the stare forest was harvested. There was a 2010 harvest and a 2008 harvest after a winter storm knocked down a bunch of trees. There was also a 2015 habitat creation project. Current harvesting plans are for 2021 or 2022 depending on when the contract is provided. There will be temporary trail closures during the harvesting. There are plans for an expanded parking area for the state forest as well. Jayson Brennen asks about the NH State Trail Steward Program. Scott says that they can ask Jesse Creddy for contact information. Michael comments how these were informative presentations but the CC can't be involved in what goes on in the State Forest.

(8:30) Approval of November minutes. Harry motions to accept and Matt 2nds. Vote is 7-0-0. Approval of December minutes. Matt motions to accept and Tom 2nds. Vote is 7-0-0. Approval of January minutes. Michael abstains. Roger motions to accept and Matt 2nds. Vote is 6-0-1.

(8:40) Joan mentions that the CC received letter from State for the Harvest of the State Forest.

(8:41) Snowfall for January is 8.75 inches. 1.71 inches of rain. On the 31st it was -2 degrees F.

(8:43) Joan motions to go to non-public and Harry 2nds. Vote is 7-0-0. CC meeting goes to non-public at 8:44.

(8:55) Matt motions to return back to public meeting and Joan 2nds.

(8:56) Tom motions to adjourn and Roger seconds. Vote is 7-0.

Minutes Recorded by
Andrew Thompson