

Litchfield Conservation Commission
May 6, 2021
Litchfield Town Hall, 2 Liberty Way

Minutes approved on 8/5/2021

In attendance: Joan McKibben, Roger St.Laurent, Matt Lepore, Kevin Lynch, Harry Menzigian, Michael Croteau, Andrew Thompson (alternate), Dianne Plansky (alternate), Marion Godzik (alternate), Jason Brennen (alternate).

Members absent: John Curtin (alternate)

(7:01) Matt calls the meeting to order in the large conference room. Member role call commences. No public comments.

(7:02) Andrew is appointed to a voting member.

(7:02) Jason presents an Acquisition Strategy slideshow. There is currently \$1.025 million in the Conservation Commission account for land acquisition. There is also \$125,000 in the farmland capital fund. Land acquisition was a top priority for Litchfield citizens. They listed the protection of historic properties, keeping the character of the town, and having blocks of land to slow down development as top priorities. Jason proposes a ranking criteria list on how to go about purchasing land. Jason also proposes that the cap for the fund be raised, which would have to go to a warrant article. Marion asks what the \$125k can be used for. That fund can be used for purchase of farmland only. Matt will send out the financial information of the CC to the members. The CC has been looking at properties for years but not many have been suitable.

Jay Minkarah from the NRPC presents his information on how to create a plan for the CC. He states that they would look at the land use types, changes to them over time and other factors. There are two goals with this plan which are a land protection strategy and a land acquisition strategy. Data can be gathered from the work of the CC or citizens. The plan could be developed within the next few months. The cost would be \$4500 and Jay will present a proposal to the CC. Marion states that the CC owned lands need to be inspected. Kevin states that some of the land should be looked at for logging purposes.

(7:25) Rene Theroux and the proposed gas station on Charles Bancroft Hwy. Morgan Hollis and Jim Petropulos, P.E. with Rene Theroux present new plans for the proposed gas station. The NH DOT has stated that having 2 driveway entrances at the proposed gas station site can not be done. The decision is based on tax parcel plans from 1971 where all the parcels next to the gas station site were 1 large parcel. The first option is to have the gas station driveway on the CC land where the current driveway is. The second option is the CC driveway would be

removed and access would be from the gas station parcel into the CC land. That is noted to be the hardest to pass because it would require lifting restrictions on the CC land. Michael C. abstains from the conversation due to being on the zoning board. Joan states that it should be presented to the Litchfield BOS. She also states that the DOT would not go with option 2. Morgan H. states that the DOT would be willing to her options from the town. The DOT ruling will be emailed to the CC. The CC property will be staked to see exactly where the driveway would be created. A site walk will be announced at a later date.

(7:45) Vacancy for a full member is available. Joan recommends Andrew to the position. Jason states that Diane should be a full member since she has done a lot outside of the monthly meetings and goes above and beyond. Roger moves to recommend Andrew to the position and Joan seconds it. Vote is 6-0-0, motion to recommend Andrew to full membership to the BOS passes.

(7:48) Proposed amendments to the CC bylaws on article 2 section c. Matt reads the bylaw: "To manage such acquired land until such time as it properly becomes the responsibility of another town organization". Matt's concern is that the wording might imply that other town organizations could control CC lands without permission. However, that is not the case and an example of it is the Merrimack River boat launch access. No change is needed at this time.

(7:54) Establish policy on land management. Matt was shown how the Londonderry Conservation Commission attends to their lands. He was very impressed with it and wants to adopt similar strategies. Joan states that one time each member had a property or properties that they were responsible for to inspect. Andrew mentions that with the new digital tools available that the inspections would be easier to accomplish. They would have maps and the data would be easily available. Matt states that next meeting there will be more discussion.

(8:00) There is still a moderate drought in NH. It is forecasted that it will be similar to last year. Matt received information from the Litchfield Fire Department about the drought. It is discussed that the CC could prohibit smoking its properties but it is also stated that is almost impossible to enforce. There could be signage posted in public forums like Facebook and the Litchfield Mirror.

(8:03) Roger excuses himself for medical reasons.

(8:07) Educational opportunities were discussed by Matt and Joan. NH Fish and Game has documents available for hunting, fishing, hiking and other outdoor activities. Some of the ideas that the CC can do is the promotion of town lands and the lands of surrounding towns. The CC should have brochures available to the public. Harry will work on and outline for educational items. The sophore projects and Eagle scouts could be possible groups to include in the educational items. Jason states that the Manchester water works would test water for Litchfield if asked.

(8:21) Trash removal at Moores Falls has become an ongoing problem. There is trash from fishing activities down by the river. Its suggested that the highway department could help with

getting trash removed. Kevin L. will ask if they will pick up trash at Moores Falls. Joan also mentions the sink hold at Moores Falls. The CC needs to leave it as is per easement agreements. The sinkhole is approximately 20ft deep according to Kevin. He says that he can have the highway department look at it to see if anything can be done. The CC should put out signage warning about the sinkhole. Matt also states he hasn't seen any syringes down by the river.

(8:31) There are training opportunities for the CC members on things related to conservation or environment. Those training opportunities should also be posted to public forums.

(8:34) Matt suggested that the CC could look into a weather station. There are funds available to purchase a system. He proposes that one could be installed at the town hall. Roger has information on weather systems that he can maybe bring to the next meeting. Jason states that St. Francis had one a few years ago and that it was connected to Weatherbug.com.

(8:37) Matt mentions that there are duck boxes available for deployment. They could be deployed at the Lonely Fort Trail in Bixby Meadows. Deering has a detailed monitoring program that could be looked at as an example.

(8:39) RAARP program is a reptile recording keeping program run by the NH Fish and Game. Joan has posters for turtle species and educational documents for snakes as well.

(8:42) Joan attended a wildlife webinar. It was about climate change and birds. One takeaway was to try to keep cats indoors.

(8:44) Muster field maintenance has to be done for the bittersweet. It can be cut down but the only way to get rid of it is with chemicals or burning. The State will be doing a historical study at the area so they only as that there is no digging at the site before they can do the study. Kevin motions to remove the bittersweet and Harry seconds. Vote is 5-1-0, passes. Kevin will look into having the highway departing help out with their available tools.

(8:53) The trash cleanup on 3A had 13 bags of trash collected. Bags were picked up.

(8:54) Stage Crossing easement discussion. Diane met with residents of the community. They met before unit 4 where a possible entry to the lands were discussed. See notes attached for Diane's meetings.

(9:08) Community Garden. See Diane's notes.

(9:12) ArcGIS tools will be discussed at the next meeting.

(9:13) Darrah Pond needs a plan from the Recreation department. There would be a 3 year treatment plan needed to deal with the native milfoil.

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(9:14) Water withdrawal from wetlands. Steve Webber was going to look into it. No word yet from him.

(9:16) Cranberry Lane property owner was taking trees from not their own property. Diane will send a letter to CC. Letter is also attached to notes.

(9:19) Rain report: 8.87 inches of rain and 2 inches of snow.

(9:20) Push approval of April 1st minutes to June meeting.

(9:22) Meeting goes to non-public per RSA:91-A:3-II(d).

(9:52) Meeting comes from non-public.

Matt motions to adjourn, Andrew 2nds, Vote: 6-0-0.

Minutes Recorded by
Andrew Thompson