

Lee Conservation Commission Minutes of Meeting of November 30, 2021

Present: Catherine Fisher (Secretary), Dawn Genes (Chair), Bill Humm, Dave Shay, Deb Sugerman, Anne Tappan

Alternate Members: Laurel Cox, Mark Nelson, Mimi Winder

Select Board Representative: Scott Bugbee

Guest: Steve Bullek, Lee Public Works Director

Approval of Minutes of October 26, 2021: D. Shay moved to accept the minutes as written; D. Sugerman seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by Lee Conservation Commission (LCC) members.

Approval of Minutes of November 3, 2021: D. Shay moved to accept the minutes as written; A. Tappan seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved by LCC.

REPORTS;

Report on Workshops held remotely during the November 6, Annual Meeting and Conference of the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions:

D. Genes reported on the two workshops she attended:

Regional Partnerships with NRCS: focused on how easements and best management practices benefit drinking water resources.

State of New Hampshire's Birds: focused on the decline of the State's breeding avian species due, primarily, to habitat loss. One third of New Hampshire's breeding bird population has declined since 1970.

C. Fisher reported on the two workshops she attended:

How Town-Owned Land Can Contribute to Climate Change Solutions: focused on how forests on town-owned lands can, by sustainable harvesting, be managed to maximize the balance between carbon storage and carbon sequestration.

Wildlife and Climate Change: Though the workshop's subtitle indicated that the focus would be both on how wildlife will be affected by climate change and on how to protect wildlife in a changing climate, the focus was solely effect: in short, as climate warms, animal populations will move north.

Treasurer's Report: D. Genes reported that Treasurer Amanda Gourgue emailed LCC members a list of the LCC's expenses since July 1. In her email, A. Gourgue reported that the LCC's account balance stands at \$5570.89 and is comprised of:

Dave Allen Fund Account Balance: \$2686.69

LCC Account Balance: \$2884.20

LCC members discussed the need to make the remaining funds last until the end of the fiscal year. A. Tappan inquired as to whether there are restrictions as to how monies in the Dave Allen Account can be used. A. Tappan will look into this. M. Winder suggested that ways of fund-raising be looked into as well.

Education/Outreach: C. Fisher reported that she had written five articles focusing on organisms found on town-owned conservation areas. They appeared in the E-Crier and the LCC Facebook page. In an email sent to LCC members, A. Gourgue reported the following activity for the period from November 1-November 28:

People Reached: 7,353 (up 314%)

Post Engagements: 1,006 (up 123%)

Page Likes: 3 (up 50%)

The funny Friday spider post of November 5th was the most popular of the month. It was seen by 5,800 people, had 110 post clicks, and had 382 reactions, comments, and shares.

Easement Monitoring: All monitoring reports have been completed for the year. LCC members who take part in monitoring will consider possible changes to next year's schedule.

Board Reports:

Zoning Board (ZBA): A. Tappan has prepared a letter to the ZBA regarding the LCC's response to the request by the Library Trustees for a variance for the proposed Library addition. The ZBA hearing will be held on December 2, 2021.

OLD BUSINESS:

NH Department of Transportation (DOT): 125 Bridge Crossing over Little River: This bridge is scheduled for replacement in 2023-24. D. Shay reported that he and A. Gourgue visited the site. The 50 year-old culvert is old and eroded. DOT is looking for feedback regarding this work. Things to be considered: threats to drinking water, possible impact on conserved lands, whether there are invasive species that need removal.

Little River Park River Trail Project: D. Sugerman reported that the QR codes are almost finished. She reported that Martin Thornton, a member of the Lee Trails Committee (LTC), visited the site where the two bridges will be built; he took measurements for each bridge site and will return in the spring to see if those measurements still work at a time when the river is usually at its highest. He will explore option to anchor the bridge, including the possibility of using a deadman (heavy plate) upstream.

LTC Progress Report:

Bridge Replacements: D. Sugerman reported that bridge #2 in the Town Forest is complete and that work will be done on bridge #6 on the 2nd and 3rd of December. Bridge #4, part of which is underwater is also scheduled for repairs.

Wheelwright Pond Swimming Area: D. Sugerman reported that this site remains very popular. People from out-of-town use the area so much that there is often no room for Lee residents. This is a carry-in/carry-out site, and trash has been a continuing problem. She reported that, if the Town is interested, she is looking into the possibility of getting an AARP grant to cover some of the work involved in improving the area.

Annual Report: D. Sugerman reported that she had submitted an annual report for the LTC; given that the Committee was formed just a few months before the fiscal year ended, the report was brief.

Committee Structure: D. Sugerman reported that, when it was created in February 2021, 14 people signed up as LTC members, but only six members regularly attend meetings, and as a result the Committee lacks a quorum. Attendance is good, however, on trail work days. It was suggested that the signees be queried as to their degree of interest and a regular committee formed based on the resulting response. It was suggested that perhaps hybrid meetings could be held with members of the quorum meeting in person while others can attend meetings via zoom. D. Sugerman will draft an LTC By-Laws document listing such things as duties of committee members, number of members, officers and their duties and terms of office.

Wadleigh Falls/Lamprey River Canoe Launch: The Lamprey River Advisory Committee (LRAC) wants to repair the stairs at the canoe launch; repairs won't be done until late in 2022.

Joe Ford Wildlife Sanctuary (JFWS) : A. Tappan reported Chuck Cox mowed the field in early November; with the exception of areas with trees or deadfalls, the entire field was done; in addition, the area around the equipment shed was mowed. A. Tappan requested that C. Cox submit an invoice for the mowing, minus the amount that had been overpaid. C. Cox discovered that a third of the width of the woods road at the culvert had been washed out; A. Tappan notified S. Bullek, and he and his crew made an excellent repair that will last a long time. A. Tappan reported that she is trying to get in touch with the arborist for New Hampshire Electric Cooperative regarding managing the power line right of way on the property. This is a good time of year for a site visit, and she will inform LCC members when this has been arranged.

NEW BUSINESS:

New LCC Alternate Member: D. Genes welcomed Laurel Cox as the LCC's new alternate member. Her knowledge and expertise will be a great asset to the Commission.

Aquatic Resource Mitigation (ARM) Award to Town of Lee for Chesley Brook Culvert

Replacement: S. Bullek reported that though this culvert wasn't scheduled for replacement until sometime in the coming years, an aquatic mitigation associated with a project on Route 16 created \$2,000,000 in mitigation funds, of which Lee will receive 65%. The new culvert will eliminate the scour hole at the outlet and the log weir. The cost will be \$375,000; \$260,000 from the Route 16 mitigation will go towards the costs. This section of Chesley brook is the only known waterway to host both the endangered American brook lamprey and native eastern brook trout; the state threatened arctic bur-reed also occurs in the area. The work will be done during the end of August/beginning of September in 2022. The Department of Environmental Services (DES) is the main grantee, and they would prefer a small local business to do the work.

S. Bullek discussed other places in Lee where culverts need replacing.

LCC Interest in Working with Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC): Two years ago, the town of Lee stopped paying dues to the SRPC. D. Genes asked if LCC members saw value in using the services provided by SRPC. All members replied in the affirmative.

Formation of Work Groups: To better keep track of, and facilitate, work in all areas under the LCC's purview, D. Genes suggested the formation of work groups. Members signed on to the following topics:

Invasive Species Control: C. Fisher, A. Tappan, M. Winder

Drinking Water: L. Cox, D. Genes, D. Shay. D. Genes will invite A. Gourgue.

Town Conservation Lands Management: L. Cox, C. Fisher, B. Humm, M. Nelson, D. Shay

Web Page Modifications: A. Gourgue, D. Sugerman, M. Winder

Intent to Cut: D. Genes reported that at the most recent Select Board meeting included an Intent to Cut (ITC) Notice. LCC has an interest when a cut is planned on properties with conservation easements and when cuts are planned adjacent to town-owned conservation lands. It would be preferable if all ITC forms be forwarded to the CC as soon as possible to allow for time to review and determine any impact to conservation lands. D. Genes will speak with the Planning and Zoning Administrator to request more lead time.

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, January 4, 5:00 p.m., Town Offices

Submitted by: _____
Catherine Fisher