

Lee Conservation Commission Minutes

Tuesday, November 21, 2023

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

Alternate Members: Laurel Cox, Mark Nelson

Board of Selectmen Representative: Scott Bugbee

Others Present: Don Quigley

Motion: To approve the Minutes of the October 17 Meeting. D. Sugerman moved to accept, C. Fisher seconded; the motion was approved by the Lee Conservation Commission (LCC).

Motion: To approve the Minutes of October 25 site walk at Maude Jones Memorial Forest. M. Winder moved to accept, C. Fisher seconded; the motion was approved by the Lee LCC.

Motion: To approve the Minutes of October 25 meeting to discuss ZBA letters. M. Winder moved to accept, A. Tappan seconded; the motion was approved by the Lee LCC.

Monthly Reports

Treasurers/Social Media: A. Gourgue submitted via email. Report attached.

The Annual Budget request has not yet been finalized by the Advisory Budget Committee.

Motion: To reimburse A. Tappan \$75.79 for the purchase of No Hunting signs and waterproof labels. D. Genes moved to accept, D. Sugerman seconded; the motion was approved by the Lee LCC

Motion: To pay the invoice for \$280 from Chuck Cox for mowing the Ford property. M. Winder moved to accept, C. Fisher seconded; the motion was approved by the Lee LCC.

Trails: D. Sugerman submitted via email. Report attached.

The Trails Sub-committee is close to completing its current goals and is excited to tackle some new projects. Additional sites were discussed for suitability of trails.

Education and Outreach: C. Fisher submitted via email. Report attached.

The Geology Walk was an outstanding success and C. Fisher hopes to plan another walk early next year.

ZBA&PB/Joe Ford/No Hunting/Lee housing planning: A. Tappan submitted via email. Report attached.

A. Tappan announced that she will be retiring from the LCC at the end of 2023. She plans to continue to attend the PB meetings. Mark Nelson has agreed to take on the responsibility of ZBA representative.

WFCL/Outreach/Documentation: M. Winder submitted via email. Report attached.

M. Winder shared her concern that projects to combat invasive plants consider the implications and make sure that a follow up plan is in place and implemented.

M. Winder is working with the new Strafford County Extension Forester, Lindsay Watkins, to develop a workshop/presentation on issues affecting trees in our community.

Easement Monitoring: No easement monitoring this month

22 Cartland Road Easement use request: D. Genes reached out to the Commissioner of Agriculture and Society for the Protection of NH Forests (SPNHF) for further clarification on this issue. It was determined that the request cannot be granted due to the restrictions of the easement. A final decision letter has been sent to the land owner.

Maude Jones Memorial Forest - Timber Harvest Plan: Don Quigley joined the meeting to discuss the plans for community outreach for this plan. A public session is planned for Tuesday, Nov. 28. He will prepare a brief (40 minute) presentation with Q&A to follow to let the public know about this project, showing the results of the previous timber harvest in 2010 and describing the process proposed to conduct the timber harvest this winter. A. Tappan will provide a handout with a brief resource list. There was a discussion on how to get the word out. D. Sugerman will post this event in the Trails Tuesday LCC FB posting and the LCC will post an article in the E-Crier to share the PPT presentation and promote the site walk on Dec 2. Notices are also posted at the MJMF.

The LCC is grateful to Don for all his work on this project. His professional experience donated on a volunteer basis provides significant expertise and savings to the town.

Motion: To appoint Don Quigley as the Conservation Commission's Official Forester volunteer for the MJMF. D. Genes moved to accept, C. Fisher seconded; the motion was approved by the Lee LCC.

Small Forest Management: D. Sugerman expressed an interest in learning more about SFM and if this might be something to explore for the Lee Town Forest. D. Quigley suggested that it definitely could be done, but there are a lot of special places in the TF that might be best left untouched. Having managed (MJMF) and unmanaged (TF) properties could provide a tool for public education on different approaches to forest stewardship.

Natural Resources Inventory: L. Cox and D. Genes attended a kickoff meeting on Nov 8 with Strafford Regional Planning. This is an ongoing project, which could help us identify areas in need of protection for the town that could have implications for the town master plan.

Housing Opportunity Planning and Potential Impact on Town Resources: Information on this is in A. Tappan's report, attached. She recommends that the CC review zoning regulations that constrain development.

Adjourn: 6:29pm

Next meeting Dec. 19

Respectfully submitted: Mimi Winder

Monthly Report, November 21, 2023

Submitted by Amanda Gourgue

Treasurer's Report

David Allan Fund Account \$2,703.08

LCC Account \$13,502.08

Total \$16,205.16

We had two transactions since our last meeting -

Reimbursement to Mimi Winder for the second first aid kit \$90.34

Reimbursement to Dawn Genes for easement supplies \$63.48

Social Media Report

October 23rd - November 19th

People Reached 4,200

Page Visits 220

Page Likes 7

Our most popular post was the Nature Notes from November 13th. It reached 1,573 people with 37 reactions, 2 comments, and 5 shares. YAY!

Lee Conservation Commission (LCC)

Education/Outreach Report for Meeting of November 23, 2023

Submitted by: Catherine Fisher

Activity since meeting of October 17, 2023

Articles Written: Five Articles were written. This is nearly half my usual quota over a given four week period, but various circumstances have laid claim on my time, and also, I'm tired. The appearance of articles will likely be spotty until after the holidays. With monitoring finished until March (with the possible exception of the Varrette easement in January), Wednesday's will be taken up with bits of easement monitoring finds that didn't make it into the weekly posts and posts about conservation and Lee's flora, fauna, and habitats.

Easement Articles Written: The year's final easement article, "Last Call: Turtle Pond - Mossy Islands and Buttonbushes" was posted on October 18.

Nature Notes: "A Rorschach Beetle of My Own" (Oct 23); "Flowers in November: Witch Hazel" (Nov 13)

Random Conservation Notes: "Beautiful Lee" (Oct 25)

Events Since October 17:

Local 4H Chapter Nature Walk, LRP, 1:30 p.m., October 23: About 25-30 participants. An equal number of adults, teens, and children. We walked the River Trail, stopping at each of the habitats. This was a fun, interested group who asked lots of questions.

Geology of the Town Forest, November 4: Wally Bothner, Emeritus Geology Professor (UNH) led a group of ten along the Roundabout Trail in the TF. Maybe my favorite walk ever. We all learned a great deal, and Wally's enthusiasm and gift for describing how the events of the distant past have shaped the forest, made for a lively and most interesting walk. There were LOTS of questions, and I received many positive remarks after the walk. I have asked Wally if he'd consider doing a similar walk at Maud Jones, and he's game. Weather permitting, he and I will do a recon walk in January.

Lee Library: Two walks were held on November 16.

Preschool Walk: 13 children (ages 2-months to 5 years) and 7 adults participated. We spent an hour and a half walking the trails searching for squirrel/chipmunk "dining stumps" (and logs and tree bases). The children had great fun looking for the telltale piles of white pine seed scales (we called them "cone petals") and the denuded cones' central stems (pine cone "sticks"). The "cone sticks" became trophies that each child carried like small, woody nosegays. Finding nurse stumps, where seeds of birch and hemlock had sprouted and grew into saplings, was another part of our day's activity, and the children were thrilled when one of them discovered a stump off trail that was completely shrouded by 9 small hemlocks. Our walk culminated in the discovery of a squirrel feast - an impressively large red squirrel midden pile with great caches of cones piled beside the length of a downed oak.

Afterschool Walk: 24 children and 4 adults participated. The activity was a repeat of the preschool activity and was just as successful. Because we don't set out until 4:00 p.m., there was not time enough to visit the midden pile before darkness began to fall, but the children enjoyed finding feeding areas, strewn petals and, of course, "pine cone sticks". By the time we returned to the Library it was twilight and a lovely thin crescent moon had risen.

Upcoming Events: Two walks, preschool and afterschool, will take place on the solstice, Dec. 21.

Trails Committee Report to Conservation Commission
Submitted by Deb Sugerman
November 21, 2023

A quiet month for the Trails Committee!

Signs were posted by Martin Thornton at Maud Jones Memorial Forest about the upcoming timber harvest, the possible short-term disruption of the trail system, and the date/time for the Public Information Session. The information will be posted on this week's Trail Tuesday. See attachment.

We have a bridge building session planned for Nov. 27 - our last for this year. Bridge 1 in the Town Forest will be replaced.

The Trails Committee is ready to tackle new trail related projects. In March of 2021 I asked the Commissioners their opinions on developing trails on other town owned conservation properties. See attachment. I would like to revisit this at the meeting, revise the document, and come up with a tentative plan. Wheelwright Pond is not on this document and I would like to include that trail in the discussion.

Monthly Report for 11/21/23 Lee CC Meeting

Tappan

Submitted by: Anne

Topic: ZBA and Planning Board

Activity since last CC meeting:

The CC provided recommendations to the ZBA on three projects:

Kustra, November 1, 2023: All variances approved. All conditions recommended by the CC were included in the ZBA approval.

Fitzpatrick, November 1, 2023: Rehearing. The ZBA approved all variances, three members voted in favor, two opposed.

Wiswell, November 15, 2023: All variances approved. All conditions recommended by the CC were included in the ZBA approval.

New Liaison (CC representative) to ZBA: Mark Nelson has agreed to take on the responsibility of CC liaison to the ZBA. Thank you, Mark. He attended the recent ZBA hearing and was introduced to the board.

Action required: The above ZBA hearings have been decided. Details about any of them can be discussed at the meeting if the CC has questions.

I will meet with Mark to share what I have learned about process, issues, and resources related to working with the ZBA. The meeting will be open to all CC members.

Topic: No Hunting signs

Activity since last CC meeting:

Forty-one NH F&G compliant No Hunting Signs were purchased. Signs have been posted by CC and Trails. Twenty signs are currently available in the CC office.

Action Required: At the September meeting a motion was made and approved authorizing up to \$90 to purchase signs and waterproof labels. The total cost of 41 signs and a package of 40 waterproof labels is \$ 75.79. A. Tappan requests reimbursement.

Topic: Ford Field Mowing Update

Activity since last CC meeting:

Met with Chuck Cox on site 17 October to discuss mowing the Ford field this fall, areas to mow are the south half of the field and the recently cleared, now regrowing, South Access area. While on site we discussed the winter storm damaged trees, which are still standing. The plan is for Chuck to mow around them and have DPW cut the trees after the field is mowed, or even wait until spring – more storm damage may occur – DPW will then cut as field

conditions and DPW workload allows. This plan has been communicated to S. Bullek. The 2023 field mowing has been completed.

Action required:

Pay Chuck Cox for the mowing work, once the invoice is received. A. Tappan will continue to monitor and report on the field conditions.

Topic: Lee Housing Opportunity Planning in Lee. Planning Board Meeting

Activity since last CC meeting:

The PB applied for and received a grant from InvestNH Housing Opportunity Planning Grant Program to conduct a Regulatory Audit. The purpose of the audit is to understand and identify barriers to housing development and propose remedies. A consultant from the Barrett Planning Group made a presentation to the Town on 25 October 2023.

Numerous topics and barriers were presented. In the report, it states, "We use barriers as a value-neutral term" and "Not all of the identified barriers will, or should be removed."

Of interest to the CC are the environmental constraints presented which included: land types that prevent building, the large amount of permanently preserved land, and regulations that are stricter than the state requires. In the presentation it was *incorrectly* stated that Lee does not allow variances in the Wet Soils Conservation Zone or the Shoreland Conservation District.

The PowerPoint presentation is available on the Lee Planning Board page.

https://www.leenh.org/sites/g/files/vyhlif776/f/uploads/barrett_planning_groups_regulatory_audit_presentation_to_the_planning_board_10252023.pdf

Any Zoning changes need to go to Voters, but not until 2025.

Action required:

A. Tappan will continue to attend PB meetings and report back to CC on this topic.

Topic: Transition

Announcement:

I have served as a member of the Conservation Commission for 32 years. I will be retiring from the commission at the end of December 2023. I would like to transition to a CC volunteer.

The NHACC article "Where Can a Commission Find More People to Help?" suggests that "Others with a particular area of expertise may be willing to assist the commission on occasion but prefer not to participate on a regular basis. In some instances, former conservation commission members continue to contribute to the work of the commission as "advisors" or "associate members".

Action Required: To be a CC volunteer, I expect to need approval from the CC.

Monthly Report for 11/21/23 Lee CC Meeting

Submitted by: Mimi Winder

Topic: EAB Presentation/Outreach

I reached out to Lindsay Watkins, the new Extension Forester for Strafford County to see if she would be willing to do an EAB presentation for the community. She is interested in doing this and we are looking at sometime in Jan/Feb. I will follow up with her to make a final plan.

I wrote a short article for the eCrier on Burning Bush. I thought it might be nice to put something out from time to time describing what various invasive plants look like “now” at different times of the year.

I also reached out to Malin Clyde and the Nature Groupie interns to let them know about the MJMF timber harvest plans and scheduled events.

Topic: Stewardship Project/WFCL - project days

I had planned 2 project days to tackle the invasives at the Wadleigh Falls Canoe Launch, Saturday, Oct 21 was rained out. (Catherine and Chris Regan, from the trails committee showed up to keep me company in case anyone else came). The following Friday, Oct 27, we had a small but enthusiastic crew and did accomplish quite a bit. More needs to be done and I hope that more days will be scheduled to continue this effort. Tom Lee has been especially helpful and I look forward to working with him in the future on this project. I was able to recruit a few volunteers and am hopeful that we will in time develop more interest for future projects. I’m keeping a list of folks to contact when needed. I also posted information in FB and eCrier and received likes from that as well. So hopefully, the word and interest will get out. The area we worked on this fall looks really good.



As an aside, I was at the site on Friday and beavers have been very busy. Catherine and I plan to go out there next week to see if it would make sense to provide beaver protection on any existing trees. Who knew that was a thing?

Topic: Tracking Invasive projects/Materials placed on town land

I created a spreadsheet to enter locations/dates when we install plastic coverings and road cloth on town land. It is important that we monitor these installations and remove these materials when they have done their job. The person who installs the material should be responsible for monitoring and removing it. Everyone can have access to this file on the shared drive.

I checked on the places that I have installed road cloth and plastic coverings. The plastic does not appear to be very effective, however the road cloth seems to be doing the job. I removed some at Mills and left some to use for comparison. I also installed some road cloth at WFCL. The plastic coverings there also do not seem to be doing a great job. I plan to meet with Ellen Snyder in December and will discuss this with her.

Topic: Future Stewardship projects

I hope to make a plan for stewardship/invasive goals and projects for next year (2024). It would be great if we could have a small group of folks who are interested to help guide this effort.