

Mon. July 17, 2023 - Leverett Conservation Commission meeting MINUTES

In Attendance:

Julia Firl, Voting member
Joan Deely, Voting member
Gail Berrigan, Voting member
Jono Neiger, Voting member
Seth Heminway, Voting member

Doc Pruyne – reporter w/ Reminder; asked to record the meeting
Patricia Duffy
Mara Waskiewicz
Tanya Cushman
Mitch Mulholland
iPhone - ?
Jack Czajkowski
Tom Hankinson
DC - ?
Abriete - 58 Depot Rd

Meeting Start Time: 7:04

Topic 1: Approval of Minutes from May 1st and June 5th meetings
Jono motion to approve; Julia 2nd; all in favor

Topic 2: Tanya Cushman – NOI hearing for work @ 15 Cider Mill Rd.
184 feet of pond frontage; wetlands delineated twice; all work is within wetland buffer zone;
yard needs to be regraded; 4 inches of loam to be added; reseeded w/ grass; mulched;
Seth – plan said topsoil (not loam) – which is it? Detailed plans say fertile, friable loam
Pink area on site plan is where fill will be added; green areas are proposed micro-swales;

Tanya: putting on gutters; wants to put sump pump in basement; discharge line will extend 15-25 feet outside basement door but won't be installed until after landscape work is done; does not routinely flood, just damp, few puddles in seep areas are usually controlled w/ a dehumidifier. Do the gutters and discharge line from basement need to be addressed in the NOI? Ans: No.

Tanya: large, berry filled buckthorn tree in wetland that she wants to remove; would use weed wrench – no herbicides; buckthorn bag may be an option; also some bittersweet and other invasives. This line of questions put off for a future meeting due to packed agenda.

Jono – how much fill (total) will be brought in from offsite; Tanya not sure of Volume, only that 4” is proposed to be added over pink area; landscaper waiting for Order of Conditions to finalize plans

Joan – slope is fairly slight, erosion fence during work should be sufficient

Jono – thinks more protection along wetland edge is necessary;

Seth – proposed for Order of Conditions: silt fence between shed and water may do more harm than good; straw wattle or hay bales only in this area; pull silt fence away from water’s edge (keep it a few feet away) to avoid damaging wetland vegetation

Seth – propose minimal sediment controls, but require bolstering if major rain is expected. See boilerplate for emergency conditions. LCC will require inspection after erosion control measures are installed; require inspection before & after a major expected rain storm

Tanya: End of Aug/early Sep is ideal work time to give grass time to establish

Jono concerned about concentrating flow of water down a steep slope toward the pond; sump pump water would only add to the amount of water flowing through the swale; Seth – installing gutters will be another point source of water (from downspouts); Jono says better strategy would be to direct water across the slope (not straight down), but the gutters are not part of the current proposal for landscaping.

Jono: FOLP plans to dump veg from HydroRake of pond on wetland edge is not acceptable– not even temporarily. Discuss in future meeting as part of FOLP actions.

Jono: proposed reduced activity within BVW area (pond edge); Tanya wants walkable access to water’s edge; does not plan to mow to the edge, but might eventually want to put a dock there; too much beaver activity to make it worthwhile to plant trees or shrubs

Language for OOC: Walking path is acceptable, but LCC recommends minimizing disturbance (cutting) of vegetation.

Joan makes motion to approve w/ boilerplate Language + 4 recommendations added during this meeting; Seth 2nd; all in favor

Topic 3: Bruce Spencer – proposed donation of 147 acres @ 353 Shutebury Rd (N. Leverett) as town forest

Seth brought it up for awareness; Tom or Pat to provide more details; Bruce brought up idea at last Select Board meeting; Seth walked some of property w/ Pat and Eva Gibavic; model forest land; would come with some funding for maintenance;

Pat Duffy – seeking input from Town and LCC about how it can be managed to fulfill Bruce’s vision;

Tom Hankinson – Bruce Spencer is highly regarded forest manager in MA; managed Quabbin area for years; maintains tract for his own hobby; is this something the Town has the capacity to manage? Who would be responsible for active forest management? Suggested that a Town Forest Management committee be formed (roads and bridge would need regular maintenance)

+ planning harvests, thinning; idea was to split timber proceeds between town and Franklin Land Trust (holds CR) and Town

Joan – get advice from neighboring towns that maintain town forests, e.g. Town of Gill, MA; some towns use town forest and donate cord wood to residents in need

House lot is not owned by Bruce; bridge is owned by Bruce; access could be problematic; what is afforded in the public records?

Bruce is interested in moving on soon. Maybe another conservation group could help? Kestrel LT? Audubon? Bruce approached Rattlesnake Gutter Trust, but they declined.

“house” lot at #353 is more of a campsite, but could be developed in the future?

Pat will do more research on the issues discussed and report back

Topic 4: Mitch Mulholland - Friends of Leverett Pond, updates on weed management

Update from Mitch: mapping completed; run-down of veg study required in Order of Conditions; followed Jono’s previous recommendation to add percentages to each quadrant; 4 invasives now documented in pond; lots of variable milfoil, but NO Eurasian milfoil; herbicide treatment seemed to help tremendously; FOLP plans to use EcoHarvester – rolling puller mechanism pulls up by roots and deposits onto conveyor belt; will try to avoid native veg (lily, etc.); maps will be reviewed w/ workers & red buoys installed on areas to be avoided; 2 species of concern found in northern end of pond; MA Natural Heritage staff have been notified of new plants found; harvesting now scheduled for mid-August due to weather delays; Mitch will send FLP in next few days for LCC to keep for our records;

Side Discussion: Mitch –area of cattails near boat launch area has greatly expanded in past 4-5 years; FOLP proposes to hand-remove 200 square feet of monoculture of cattail; Jono and Mitch want to meet at site; blocking channel would be only justification for removal of cattail; blocking view is not acceptable; dry hydrant is not being used, so access to the hydrant is not an acceptable excuse to remove cattail;

Mitch – Town improved the right-of-way in 2010; water level was so low in 2018 due to leaky dam that cattail took over

Jono – Town owns a parcel at the end of Putney Road, but this is a private road; could new access point be installed there? There are laws about public access to Great Ponds; there is another cut from Putney Rd directly to the pond

Abriete – all living things are as important as humans

Joan shared link to USGS article about how cattails can be both good and bad.

Jono – mentioned that broad-spectrum herbicides threaten newly found rare plants; Mitch disagrees; dosages and types of herbicides used are safe;

Jono – wants Mitch’s map of treatment areas to include the numbered quadrants; Mitch agreed to do this

Jono – red areas on treatment map must include distances; Mitch agrees – map is just a draft; will be finalized soon (next week or 2)

Gail – reminder that any veg material must be placed >100 feet from wetland, according to OoC

Mitch – hydrorake requires pulled veg to be placed on land immediately to dry, then is moved after a few days to weeks; Gail says the OoC still applies; Mitch says in future, veg will be loaded onto a trailer and transported to a non-wetland area

Mitch – is refueling okay on water if spill pads are used? Expected to need to refuel 1x/day
Can OoC be Amended? Gail asks to table discussion until August meeting.

FOLP asking for alternative to re-fueling the harvester 100' from the pond (as required by Order of Conditions)

Harvester dates planned for late July, weather dependent

Topic 5: Seth Heminway - Leverett Trails Committee – proposal to add a loop trail to the Ruth McIntyre property

For situational awareness of LCC: Ruth M. property is owned by Town; only trail on property is a portion of the Robert Frost Trail; adding a loop would enable hikers to access more of western side of property; Seth proposes to place flags on potential new trail; could make it handicap accessible since it's a level area;

Topic 6: Review of town accounts controlled by LCC; confirm which accounts are still active; add to August or September LCC Agenda; dues to MACC are due. Joan will follow up with Ryan.

Topic 7: Old Business

- Emergency Certification issued to Eversource on 6/7/23 – Julia, Seth, Joan signed off
- Kestrel LT acquired the Heronemus tract on 6/16/23
- Kevin Williams (22 Richardson Rd.) – Joan signed off on garage permit
- Site visit on 7/5/23 to lot for sale at corner of Juggler Meadow & 63 – LCC does not have capacity to pursue purchasing the parcel for conservation
- Franklin Regional Council of Govt's (Bob Dean & Keith Barnicle) – meeting on shared Agent;
- LCC website needs to be updated; no capacity.
- Hiring of Conservation Agent: position needs to be re-posted; no capacity
- 350 Shutesbury Rd update: National Grid installed poles without warning; sediment barriers were installed, but LCC was supposed to come inspect pre-installation of poles; Rich and Hilary invited us to visit; they still need to install sediment barriers for the trench work to be done, so it may make sense to wait to visit until that work is done. Seth will try to visit this week and will coordinate with Hillary and Rich.

Topic 8: Any items not anticipated in advance of tonight's meeting?

Gail – Order of Conditions: Gail found sample Amendment to OoC (for FOLP re-fueling change); sent reference packet via email during meeting; Gail recommends we inform the Select Board that we may not be able to conduct business with such low membership and no Agent; Gail volunteers to be moderator for future meetings to help keep meetings focused

Topic 9: Mail

- 6/4/23: Pioneer Valley Fern Society (Janice and Randy Stone) – invited LCC to attend fern walk at 4H Forest on 6/11/23.
- 6/5/23: Macaylla Silver – comment that LCC is being played by FOLP due to approval at tonight’s meeting to hire Bregieta Arvidson
- 6/6/23: FWD from Nancy & Brian Emond – comment on FONSL’s process, declined to serve on committee
- 6/12/23: Alec Kaisand – BioMap Outreach Specialist offered to meet/give a presentation on the updates to the BioMap conservation planning tool.
- 6/12/23: Macaylla Silver - Public Comment opposing removal of cattail near Leverett Pond boat launch

Seth made motion to adjourn, Julia 2nd, all in favor.

Meeting End Time: 10PM ?

Minutes recorded by Julia Firl, voting member.