

## Town of Leverett Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes: Dec 16, 2024

### **Attendance**

Jono Niger (Chair)  
Joan Deely (Vice Chair)  
Seth Heminway, voting member  
Julia Firl, voting member  
David Powicki, voting member  
Isabella Yeager (Conservation Agent)  
Jim Field, RDA applicant  
Jim Hicks & Anna Botta, RDA applicants

***Meeting preceded by Executive Session from 5-6pm.***

### **Meeting preliminaries**

Meeting opens at 6:14pm. Attendance is taken.

### **Approval of minutes: 11/4/24**

Seth makes a motion to approve the minutes as presented by Julia Firl. David seconds. Jono abstains. The motion passes.

### **1. Public inquiries: none**

### **2. New business**

#### **a. RDA, 17 Cider Mill Rd: Jim Field tree pruning**

i. The board revisits the details of Jim Field's tree pruning project, which had been previously filed as an abbreviated NOI. They discuss Jim's hope to act on advice from the contracted arborist about whether two silver maples need to be removed or merely pruned to protect their longevity, and to prune an oak to slow its decline following beaver damage (all three trees ~35' from mean annual high water mark of Leverett Pond). **The board issues a determination of negative 3**, stating that a field decision may be made about whether to remove the maples, with any generated debris to be allowed to decay on the property as a wildlife resource, and the beaver-damaged oak may be weight pruned to mitigate fall risk. They agree that mitigation plantings are not necessary provided that existing native shoreline vegetation be allowed to grow to maturity to make up for loss of canopy cover.

ii. Jim Field inquires about a plan he has been mulling over to construct a viewing platform extending into Leverett Pond from Friendship Trail. David recommends he discuss the details with a specific Northampton-based builder (name?). Jono mentions that it might be worth considering whether a Town-owned parcel could be used for access. Seth suggests Jim discuss his idea with the Leverett Trails Committee at their next meeting.

#### **b. RDA, 88 Jackson Hill Rd: Jim Hicks & Anna Botta new well**

i. The board reviews the RDA submitted by Jim Hicks and Anna Botta to dig a new/deeper well on their property, as it has dried out in the past. The plan was approved by the Leverett Board of Health on 11/4/2024. The plan is not, as the applicants indicated on their RDA, exempt from jurisdiction of the WPA, as it is not a public water source project. **The board issues a determination of negative 3**, with the stated conditions that before work can begin the board shall receive from the contracted well driller a plan detailing the placement of the slurry pit, topo lines, and the intended disposal of tailings and capture of water released during drilling process. Once this plan has been approved by the board, work can begin without a second advertised hearing.

### **3. Other business**

#### **a. Conservation Agent's Report**

i. Seth and Conservation Agent Bella describe the options for installing a flow control device to mitigate potential flooding of Doolittle Brook where it is culverted on Shutesbury Road, north of the 4H Forest. Bella has been in touch with Mike Callahan of Beaver Solutions LLC regarding the process of getting a site assessment and cost of install for a flow device. The board discusses the importance of getting buy-in from and maintenance training for highway department, as well as contacting abutters of the site. The board agrees a flow device seems like the least expensive and most beneficial long-term solution to potential beaver conflicts on the site. Bella will follow up with Mike Callahan about steps leading up to a possible March site assessment/May install, and contact abutters.

ii. Bella mentions that there is the chance to schedule a call with the Department of Environmental Restoration regarding dam removal projects, and the board agrees this is the purview of the Highway Department and that Matt Boucher could be contacted regarding any list they may have of undersized or otherwise problematic culverts.

b. Seth mentions that he might follow up with Jim Hicks regarding donation of land to the Town.

### **4. Administrative matters**

a. Jono Niger announces that he will be stepping down from the board, effective immediately. The board thanks him for his years of service and discusses next steps for recruiting new members. Bella will follow up with a possible position description provided by MACC.

There is a motion to adjourn. It is seconded. The motion passes unanimously.  
Meeting adjourned at 7:14pm.

Next meeting: 1/6/25

Minutes submitted by: Isabella Yeager

Approved on: 1/6/25