

Leverett Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes: April 21, 2025

Start Time: 7:02 PM

Board attendance: Joan Deely, Acting Chair; Seth Heminway, David Powicki, Julia Firl, voting members; Sarah Manteiga, new member (non-voting - not yet sworn in)

In Person

Mitch Mulholland
Eva Gibavic
Anna Botta
Jim Hicks
Bill Corwin
Susan Mareneck
Tom Hankinson

Zoom

John Anderson
Tanya C.

Public Inquiries

New Board Member – Bill introduces himself; interest in local issues, on trails committee, trail maintenance; has environmental law background; experience with zoning laws and issues

Members gave overview of commissioner activities, types of projects we deal with, etc.; MACC membership; DEP circuit rider (Mark Stinson) is good resource

Public Hearing: FLP Cattail Removal Project

Mitch shows map and sketch of area of cattails to be removed, requesting to remove about 200 sq ft of hybridized cattails. Project proposal asserts that cattails are encroaching into the only perennial stream entering the pond, and that no cattails were present in 1993 study, after which point they have since crowded most of open water and other vegetation near boat ramp. Proposal estimates the current extent of cattail monoculture to be 4 acres, and that they will grow up to 10 feet tall, obscuring the view from the bank. Mitch shows pictures over the years of the cattails encroaching, and asserts that there is evidence of increased algae growth at boat launch due to slowed water flow.

In 2011, FLP did rehab of boat launch right-of-way. Town provided heavy equipment.

In June, FLP wants to use hydiorake (approved as part of existing NOI **200-0196** and dredging permit ____). Can remove cattails in about 10 minutes. Will haul off to dry out, then compost away from the pond. **A survey of pond vegetation to happen after.**

Joan reads statement emailed in from Pat Duffy, commenting as a member of public, not as select board member. She is not opposed to a small area near the inlet being cleared. Provided evidence of importance of cattails for pond ecology.

David asked for more info on the footprint of cattails to be removed. The planned area for hydioraking is under 200 square feet within a larger 4-acre monoculture.

Fire Dept has a new pump that can pull from <1 foot of water. There are also new hydrants in North Amherst that can be tapped for fire fighting. Current fire dept does not think it's necessary to refurbish the inlet pump.

Joan asked about where removed vegetation will be dumped. Mitch says they will dry out and likely be dumped at the transfer station; rhizomes will not be able to establish in dump (too dry). Sarah asks if species have been ID'd. Two species have been identified: one, hybridized and considered invasive, and a second, slower-growing native species.

Seth makes a motion. Julia seconds. Motion passes unanimously. Bella will prepare. Joan asks that Mitch let us know exact dates that the vegetation survey will be done; **probably mid-June, 2 weeks before hydorrake (end of June).**

Board Discussion

Leverett Historical Commission surveying project with Eva Gibavic & Susan Mareneck

Leverett Historical Commission has applied for CPA funds to do basemap of Graves Ironworks site on N. Leverett Rd. Part of the new Heritage Park is owned by the Town. Eva and Susan shared map and photos. Old Ironworks are described. Have LIDAR data that show levy, mill pond, ironworks, etc. Have 6" contours map that shows levee fairly well, but not enough detail of the ironworks. Showed example of project showing individual stone walls. Wants everything mapped so someone who specializes in ironworks can inform the Town on what is important to preserve. Had consultant with hand-held LIDAR unit walk the site on Friday. Susan applied for grant that covered early spring LIDAR work. Post-processing will require more funding? Once Tom has interpreted ground scan, RFP needs to be submitted for second phase. Phase 2 will use data to complete on-site field work and additional research. 2022 program on Youtube was a start. Want to complete basemap of the site, including the whole area below the sawmill (not on Town property). Historical record of gypsum mill and other Graves family enterprises. Susan wants to know full history of site. Industrial archaeologist recommended basemap for further study. Likely a forge, not just a blacksmith. Not contemplating any excavation (nothing within purview of LCC). Ironworks is newfound, popular attraction of Heritage Park. Has put up signage to discourage public from digging or excavating anything. Any future archaeological work will need to be permitted. Presentation for LCC awareness only.

Jim Hicks and Ann Botta Land Donation

Seth and Joan walked the site about 2 weeks ago. Parcel is ~20 acres that abuts Cave Hill C.A. Seth thinks it would be beneficial to the town for better hiking access. Structures (old cabin and shed) will need to be removed. Will need fresh boundary survey to carve off building lot and/or allow room for septic repair. Landowners not working with legal counsel yet. LOs have not talked with abutters yet. Town typically puts a conservation easement on property donated to the town, e.g. Rattlesnake Gutter Trust or Kestrel Trust. LOs open to the idea of a conservation easement. No time constraints or deadlines, not planning to sell or move. LCC will set up a meeting with land trust(s). Survey, subdivision process, title search, demolition – careful of contaminants, asbestos. Seth asks if they want their name attached to the property. **Eva does not recommend "messaging with" existing CRs.** Benefits of RGT holding the CR: they do not require endowment; holds CR on Cave Hill. LOs want Town to cover all due diligence expenses since the land will be donated. Seth is on RGT Board and will initiate conversation. LOs out of town most of summer. **Does there need to be a town vote to accept the donation? To spend funds on due diligence?**

Shutesbury Road Beaver Project

David makes motion to set aside up to \$6k. Seth seconds. Motion passes. LCC will need to issue NOI, or we can bundle it as an Emergency Permit. E permit would be fastest solution. The Commission decides Emergency Permit is the best option.

New England Central RR notice of 2025 herbicide plan

In the past, LCC has requested that agent come along on pre-spray survey to point out sensitive areas that should not be sprayed. Bella – please get in contact with RR and ask to be included on pre-work survey if your time allows. Seth interested in seeing MSDS. LCC does not have the option to say “no”, but we can offer comments and concerns. Main crossing is over Depot Rd and Juggler Meadow Rd.

CR marking discussion

Lots of CRs held by RGT. Some boundary markers need to be refreshed. Seth will start using paint or carrying markers on trail monitoring walks. Liz Etheridge coordinates CR monitoring. Invite her to attend a meeting. Seth and Bella have discussed vendors for metal markers, but have not ordered anything. There is land owned by the ConCom that does not have a 3rd party CR... ConCom should be monitoring these for conservation compliance. Bella – create list of parcels owned by ConCOM but not protected. Initiate putting a CR on these unprotected properties.

Conservation Agent's Report discussed.

Be mindful of budget

Approval of Minutes

Jan 6, 2025: Seth makes motion to approve. Joan seconds. The motion passes unanimously.

Mar 3, 2025: David makes motion to approve. Seth seconds. The motion passes unanimously.

May Agenda Items

Beaver update

RGT will be invited

Evans-Marlowe Executive Session

Enter Executive Session w/ Sarah as permitted guest.

Mediation rescheduled for May 15th. Joan and David will attend. All of SelectBoard will attend.

End ES at 8:33

End full meeting at 8:33.

Submitted by: Julia Firl

Approved on: 5/5/25