



Town of Merrimack, New Hampshire

Community Development Department

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Planning - Zoning - Economic Development - Conservation

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MERRIMACK CONSERVATION COMMISSION MONDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2023 MEETING MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER -

A Meeting of the Conservation Commission was called to order on Monday February 27, 2023 at 6:30 pm in the Matthew Thornton Room.

Steve Perkins, Chair, presided:

Members of the Commission Present:

Michael Boisvert, Vice-Chair
Ellen Kolb
Michael Drouin, Alternate Member
Gage Perry
David Trippett, Alternate Member

Members of the Commission Absent:

Cindy Glenn
Andy Hunter, Town Councilor
Gina Rosati, Alternate Member
Eric Starr

Also Participating:

- George May, 157 Naticook Road, Lower Merrimack River Local Advisory Committee & Souhegan River Local Advisory Committee
- Nelson Disco, 10 Underwood Lane, Lower Merrimack River Local Advisory Committee & Souhegan River Local Advisory Committee

Chair Perkins designated Commissioner Trippett to sit in as a voting member for Commissioner Glenn and Commissioner Drouin to sit in as a voting member for Commissioner Starr.

PUBLIC HEARINGS - None

NEW BUSINESS –

- George May from the Lower Merrimack River Advisory Committee to speak about open positions on the committee

Mr. May was joined by Mr. Disco. Mr. May explained that he met with the Town Council when he resigned from the Lower Merrimack River Local Advisory Committee (LMRLAC), though he is still serving on the Souhegan River Local Advisory Committee (SoRLAC). He wanted to let the public know there are two vacancies on the committee and volunteers are needed. Mr. May explained that there are three different River groups involved. LMRLAC, SoRLAC and the Souhegan Watershed Association. They all serve slightly different purposes but are all involved in the protection of the Rivers.

The LMRLAC needs volunteers to attend meetings. Mr. May said the committee advises the NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) about permitting within a quarter of a mile on either side of the Merrimack River. The committee is made up of members from the four communities (Litchfield, Hudson, Merrimack, and Nashua) bordering the quarter mile stretch of the River. The hope is to have three members from each community involved to look at the stretch of the River in proximity to their community. Currently both the LMRLAC and SoRLAC are working to create 10 year master plans. The Merrimack River plan will be forthcoming soon and will most likely come before the Conservation Commission. The LMRLAC will be asking that their master plan be referenced in the Town Plan. This would ensure anyone who wants to do anything along the Merrimack River would be referenced to both sets of plans for requirements.

There are two projects on the Merrimack River that are currently imminent. One is the relocation of Costco and the other is the Green Meadow Golf Course in Hudson. Members will look at plans to check for things such as snow removal plans as snow cannot be dumped into the River. Both groups do this type of work. Although they are focusing on the area within a quarter mile of the River, they are not limited to this area when making recommendations to NHDES in regards to permitting.

Mr. May then explained the Souhegan Watershed Association stating that it was not limited to a quarter mile within the River. It looks at everything that drains into the Souhegan River. This includes a significant portion of water flowing from Bedford and Baboosic Brook which eventually enters into the Souhegan and Merrimack Rivers. The Souhegan Watershed Association works on programs to protect the Souhegan River and the watershed, including all of its tributaries.

One of the projects they regularly ran (until the recent COVID pandemic) was a water monitoring program. Water samples were collected from predesignated sites along the Merrimack and Souhegan Rivers on a biweekly basis. The program will resume this year. Volunteers typically adopt one of the predesignated sites to collect water samples.

Testing is very simple and is looking for water quality in relation to whether it is safe for individuals to swim in and checks the overall health of the Rivers for the aquatic life within it. This information is primarily collected for public education purposes and to hopefully attract interest in avoiding pollution of these waterways.

Mr. May continued to explain more details of water sampling and the meeting schedules for each of the committees. Sampling usually takes place from the beginning of June until Labor Day.

Mr. May said he was also looking to get some funding approved by the Conservation Commission. When he had spoken with the Town Council, he asked that each Town provide \$50.00 to keep the water monitoring program going. Typically the group only spends between \$300.00 and \$500.00 for the supplies. There are no expenses for anything other than supplies since it is run on a volunteer basis. The Souhegan Watershed Association also picks up some of the cost. Since Merrimack has two Rivers coming through, he asked Town Council for \$100.00.

Commissioner Perry questioned if the Town Council said yes and sent Mr. May to the Conservation Commission for final approval. He responded they had not, but he suspects it probably would need to be approved through the Commission. This cost would only need to be paid for once a year. Mr. May said if this could be put into the Commission's budget it would be very helpful. He said Merrimack had not contributed in the past, mostly because it was something he had not advocated for.

Chair Perkins was not sure which Commission fund this money should come from. He said he would confirm and see if the Town Council had already made an appropriation. If they had not, this item would be placed onto the agenda for the Commission's next meeting. He said that there was no need for another presentation before the board. Commissioner Perry asked if Mr. May could leave his contact information and where funds should be sent. Commissioner Kolb added that the Public Works Department through the wastewater division has been helpful in water monitoring in the past, they cannot help this year because of the construction at their facility. She was on board with asking the Town Council if these donations could be made.

Mr. May said part of the reasons the costs are so low for the water monitoring program is because the wastewater treatment plants have been so helpful. Mr. May added that the Rivers are doing quite well. The Souhegan River is about 10 times smaller than the Merrimack River meaning pollution is more easily detectable in it. The Souhegan River typically shows up with more issues on a more frequent basis. Whenever it rains, especially after hard rains, whatever gets washed into the River from the riverbank can cause E.coli levels to rise and elevated levels can last for about three days. Typically if levels get too high, the Fire Department will place a warning sign at the premises.

Chair Perkins asked where the existing 10 year plan could be found. Mr. May responded that the new plan is still being worked on. Both plans are available through

the Nashua Regional Planning Commission and a search should pull the documents up. The new plan is almost finished and will probably be available within the next few months. Commissioner Kolb said she could provide Chair Perkins with a draft of the master plan which she received when she joined the LMRLAC. She also provided the email address for a contact who could assist any volunteers interested in the water sample collection program: souhegan.river.monitoring@gmail.com

- Request for donation to Sklar Waterfront Park – *Submitted by Mike Drouin*

Commissioner Drouin would like to donate tree seedlings and two benches for use at Sklar. He first proposed this in January, went before the Town Council, and was advised to go to the Conservation Commission for a recommendation on whether to accept the donation. The Commission can't accept the donation directly but can recommend that the Council accept it.

The Merrimack River Watershed Council (MRWC) has been working with the Sklar subcommittee on measures to control invasive plants, and there will be an event in April to clear out a section of burning bush. This will leave a very large bare area in need of re-vegetation with native plant varieties adapted to the soil in the area. Commissioner Drouin would like to donate 25 of each of the following: red dogwood, wetland rose, buttonbush, and fragrant sumac. These plants are all native and appropriate for the soil type and would be planted by the Subcommittee. He would also like to donate two benches, wooden, possibly with concrete legs, valued at no more than \$300.00 each. The total value of the seedlings would be around \$120.00. Discussion briefly touched on the specifics of how to accept this donation. Consensus of the Commissioners is to recommend that the Town Council accept these donations.

OTHER BUSINESS –

- 2023 Seedling order update – *Submitted by Steve Perkins*

Commissioner Perry reported that the state nursery is out of stock, but he is looking into ordering seedlings from Arbor Day, or from Hillsborough County which recently sent the Commission information about its own seedling sale. The Commission approved at an earlier meeting an expenditure of \$500.00 for this project, assuming at the time that the state nursery would have seedlings available. The project is going ahead with other vendors.

Commissioner Perry was unsure of the pricing for seedlings and wasn't comfortable giving an amount if it was not correct. He will continue to gather more information. Chair Perkins said that if the total from those vendors exceeds the approved amount and an order deadline comes before the next Commission meeting, an emergency meeting can be called to address the single issue of increasing the amount for the project.

- HHNP Subcommittee sign request price difference update and vote for additional funds
– *Submitted by Mike Boisvert*

Vice-Chair Boisvert reported that a quote from Lowe's for sign material (\$150.00), which the Commission voted to fund at a previous meeting, was for an incorrect material. The Lowe's website had unfortunately listed the wrong product number and the item ordered ended up being cedar decking. The cedar boards are more expensive and the cost will come to a total of \$250.00. Lowe's refunded the amount of the decking and charged the higher price. An additional \$100.00 will be needed. Chair Perkins noted funds were already allocated and approved by vote, they would just need to approve the change in cost.

Motion by Commissioner Trippett to approve an additional \$100.00 from Fund 53 to cover the cost of seven cedar boards to create signs.

**Seconded by Commissioner Perry
Motion Carried
6-0-0**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES –

Motion by Commissioner Kolb to approve the February 13, 2023 Conservation Commission minutes with the following amendments:

Page 2, Line 66: insert apostrophe in "high schools"

Page 2, Line 67: change "tis" to "this"

Page 4, line 165: change "seven signs" to "seven cedar boards"

**Motion Seconded by Commissioner Drouin
Motion Carried
6-0-0**

ADJOURNMENT –

**Motion to Adjourn by Commissioner Perry
Motion Seconded by Vice-Chair Boisvert
Motion Carried
6-0-0**

The February 27, 2023 meeting of the Conservation Commission was adjourned at 7:18pm.