

These minutes were approved at the April 24, 2023 meeting.

DURHAM CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Monday, March 27, 2023
DURHAM TOWN HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS
7:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jake Kritzer (Chair); Erin Hardie Hale, Nicholas Lanzer (alternate), Roanne Robbins, Dwight Trueblood (alternate) and Carden Welsh (Town Council Rep).

MEMBERS ABSENT: John Nachilly (Vice Chair), James Bubar and Neil Slepian

ALSO PRESENT: Town Planner Michael Behrendt;
Land Stewardship Coordinator Sara Callaghan

I. Call to Order & II. Land Acknowledgement Statement

Chair Jake Kritzer called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. and read the Land Acknowledgement Statement.

III. Roll Call

Roll call attendance was taken. It was noted Mr. Nachilly is expected to attend via zoom but isn't yet present. Mr. Behrendt said Mr. Bubar will not continue on the Planning Board and therefore won't be the PB rep to the Commission. A new representative will likely be named at their May meeting.

The Chair seated alternates Nick Lanzer and Dwight Trueblood as voting members, filling in for Mr. Nachilly and Mr. Slepian.

IV. Approval of Agenda

Councilor Welsh MOVED to approve the agenda as submitted; SECONDED by Ms. Hale; APPROVED unanimously, 6-0.

V. Public Comments

Nell Neil came forward as Chair of the Integrated Waste Management Advisory Committee. She said about a year and a half ago, the Committee began work to increase

the number of items that could be recycled. They eventually broadened their scope beyond waste management to look at sustainability in all areas. The Committee is looking to tie in its initiatives with the Global Covenant of Mayors, in which Durham is involved. She read a brief paragraph explaining the covenant.

IWMAC has reached out to other committees and commissions including Agriculture, Energy, Parks & Recreation and now the Conservation Commission. The goal is to have a coordinated, town-wide effort.

To help achieve visual identity, IWMAC designed a Sustainability logo to be used on all relevant communications with residents. She showed the Commission the logo. There was consensus among Commission members that this is a good logo.

VI. Indigenous Foraging Rights. Discussion about draft proposal to allow foraging by indigenous groups on public land.

The Chair drafted a document about foraging rights, but it hadn't been distributed to the Commission in advance. As background, Chair Kritzer said the Commission initiated discussion with indigenous people and organizations about a year ago. The goal was to turn the Town's Land Acknowledgement Statement into something actionable. As a result of those discussions, the indigenous representatives asked if they could be granted foraging rights on town-owned land.

Kathleen Blake, a member of Indigenous NH Collaborative Collective, introduced herself.

Chair Kritzer believes there is nothing in the statement that is not already allowed. He feels that this is substantially symbolic.

Ms. Hale asked if Ms. Blake had worked with other communities on this type of statement. Ms. Blake said that she is working in Dover at this time, but using Durham's template. She has also worked with some private entities. She stated that a lot of the issues have been caused by lack of sustainable practices. It would help the environment to have traditional sustainable practices. She would like other people to become more aware of the land around them.

Chair Kritzer had hoped that this would lead to some educational opportunities, but it would be fine if private citizens wanted to go onto the land themselves.

Ms. Blake mentioned some of the non-native plants that are edible that are on the lands today. Some of them are invasive species.

Ms. Callaghan mentioned that beyond just foraging, there are plants used for purposes other than eating.

There was additional discussion on the draft statement. Mr. Behrendt asked if they may want to have the Town Council endorse this plan. Councilor Welsh wasn't sure that it was needed, but it wouldn't hurt.

Chair Kritzer will make some more revisions to the draft and bring it back to the Commission at the next meeting.

VII. Land Stewardship. Sara Callaghan, Land Stewardship Coordinator

Ms. Callaghan gave an update on a number of topics:

- **Pike Property:** Duane Hyde from SELT made changes to the management plan. It was reviewed and approved by ARM. He is still waiting to hear back from NRCS.

Ms. Callaghan reviewed baseline documentation report with Todd Selig. Bonnie Pike as Trustee will sign it. She will deed the easement and then the land will transfer to the town. The property is still on target for a June closing.

Mr. Hyde has asked Ms. Callaghan to look at the vernal pools on the property since the last inspection was done in the fall and he wants to know about reptiles and amphibians.

- **Oyster River Forest:** Ms. Callaghan is working with Stewarding Our Land Working Group. The plan is to update signage and trail maps. A bridge also needs to be repaired.
- A town resident has asked to have landscaping done near the Kenny Rotner Bridge. Ms. Callaghan met with Todd Selig and DPW to discuss and will come up with a plan and budget.
- **Longmarsh Preserve:** A group of volunteers cut back invasive species there last week.

VIII. WCOD and SPOD. Discussion about the criteria for a conditional use in the Wetland Overland District (WCOD) and Shoreland Protection Overlay District (SPOD) and possible proposal for zoning amendment.

Mr. Trueblood mentioned that there were some edits to the proposal since the last meeting. The working committee is fine with the proposal. There was discussion on the proposal.

Councilor Welsh MOVED to accept changes as shown and described by Mr. Behrendt for the criteria for a conditional use in the Wetland and Shoreland Overlay District; Mr. Trueblood SECONDED the motion, APPROVED unanimously, 6-0.

IX. PREPA Grant. Discussion about Piscataqua Region Environmental Program Assessment Grant to protect natural resources and water quality.

Mr. Trueblood mentioned that Emily Friedrichs, at the last Wetland & Shoreland Subcommittee, had mentioned that PREPA had come out with a proposal for grant funding. One of the options for funding was to complete a natural resources inventory. However, the timeline to submit an application is pretty short. Mr. Trueblood is wondering if this is something the Town should pursue and who could take the lead on this - is there a group ready to put a proposal together?

Chair Kritzer asked what the application would entail. Mr. Trueblood didn't think it would take a very long proposal.

Ms. Callaghan did look at the maps in the 2015 Master Plan regarding natural resources. Mr. Trueblood questioned how relevant the information is that the Town currently has. Mr. Behrendt stated that the Master Plan will be redone within the next five years. Chair Kritzer stated that he is wondering if this grant would be a good idea if they are moving forward with approving the foraging rights policy.

There was additional discussion on the proposed value for a natural resources inventory. Chair Kritzer asked if anyone wants to take the lead on applying for this grant. No one came forward to volunteer. Chair Kritzer stated that he thanks the Subcommittee for bringing this grant to their attention. He feels that the Conservation Commission needs to think about how to start to list issues that come up to possibly apply for grants in the future.

There was discussion on buffer widths and policy. Ms. Callaghan described what a natural resources inventory would include. The goal of an inventory is to tell you the size of the wetlands and how important they are within the Town of Durham.

X. Education Program. Discussion about potential conservation education programs for 2023.

Ms. Robbins stated that it might be good for the Commission to have some educational exchanges with residents and businesses outside of one-day events. A theme could be chosen and then educational opportunities could be built around that theme.

There was further discussion about this. Chair Kritzer stated that they could discuss a theme over the winter months, and then with Earth Day, they could announce what the theme will be. He feels that they should go with pollinators as a theme this year.

Ms. Hale suggested that a subcommittee get together to discuss future events. Ms. Hale, Ms. Robbins and Ms. Callaghan volunteered to be on the subcommittee. Mr. Behrendt thought it should be called a working group as it is a more informal group. There was discussion about the Durham Earth Day event and who might be available to participate.

XI. Review of Minutes: January 30 and February 27, 2023.

Sara Callaghan mentioned that her name was spelled incorrectly.

Chair Kritzer MOVED to approve the January and February minutes as amended; Councilor Welsh SECONDED the motion, APPROVED unanimously.

XII. Other Business

No other Business

XIII. Roundtable. Updates from Conservation Commission members.

XIV. Adjournment

Councilor Welsh MOVED to adjourn; Mr. Lanzer SECONDED the motion, APPROVED unanimously

Respectfully submitted,

Lucie Bryar & Karen Edwards, Minute Takers
Durham Conservation Commission

Note: These written minutes are intended only as a general summary of the meeting. For more complete information, please refer to the DCAT22 On Demand videotape of the entire proceedings on the town of Durham website.