

These minutes were approved at the August 28, 2023 meeting.

**DURHAM CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MONDAY, JULY 24, 2023
DURHAM TOWN HALL - COUNCIL CHAMBERS
7:00 PM**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Jacob Kritzer, Erin Hardie Hale, Neil Slepian, Alternate Nick Lanzer, Alternate Dwight Trueblood, Richard Kelley, Carden Welsh (arrived via Zoom at 7:28 pm)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Vice Chair John Nachilly, Roanne Robbins

OTHERS PRESENT: Town Planner Michael Behrendt

I. Call to Order

Chair Kritzer called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

II. Land Acknowledgment Statement –

The meeting began with a reading of the Land, Water, and Life Acknowledgment, which was passed and approved by the Human Rights Commission:

The town of Durham, New Hampshire wishes to acknowledge the spiritual and physical connection maintained by the Pennacook, Abenaki and Wabanaki peoples to N'dakinna (homeland), aki (land), nibi (water), lolakwikak (flora) and awaasak (fauna). New Hampshire has been home to these Indigenous people for thousands of years. The residents of Durham acknowledge the ongoing hardships endured by our Indigenous neighbors after the loss of their unceded homelands which we now steward and we will work to foster relationships to support the well-being of Indigenous people who carry forward the traditions of their ancestors.

III. Roll Call of Members and Seating of Alternates. Durham Town Planner Michael Behrendt, Neil Slepian, Dwight Trueblood (alternate), Chair Jacob Kritzer, Erin Hardie Hale, Planning Board Rep Richard Kelley, and Nick Lanzer (alternate) were all present.

Both alternates were seated in Vice Chair Nachilly's and Member Robbins' absences.

IV. Approval of Agenda

The Land Stewardship update was removed in Ms. Callaghan's absence.

Mr. Kelley MOVED to APPROVE the agenda as amended. SECONDED by Mr. Slepian and PASSED unanimously.

V. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

VI. Election of Vice Chair

Chair Kritzer nominated Ms. Hardie Hale as the new vice chair. Ms. Hardie Hale accepted the nomination.

Mr. Trueblood MOVED to VOTE for Ms. Hardie Hale as the Vice Chair. SECONDED by Mr. Kelley and PASSED (5-0-1).

VII. Pike Property

Mr. Behrendt provided a brief history of the acquisition of the property. One of the funders required a condition that no new trails be created on that property. There is an allocation of money in the budget for signage and archeological work at the property, but there is nothing planned currently. The commission discussed potentially adding markers to more prominently identify the property boundaries. The Pike property came with a management plan, which the town will follow.

Chair Kritzer shared an invitation addressed to the town for a SELT Landowner Gathering on Monday, August 14 at 5 p.m. As he is unable to attend, he asked anyone on the commission to let him know if they are interested in attending in his stead.

VIII. Horsehide Brook

The commission discussed the suggestion from Michael Hoffman to place public-use binoculars along Durham Point Road to provide views toward the brook and wetlands. This would allow the public to view some of the wildlife in that area, including shorebirds. The commission expressed concerns about parking on the road as it relates to public safety and potential liability to the town. The commission would need to talk with Public Works and the Durham Police Department about whether it is feasible to put in a safe pullout for parking without further encroachment on the wetlands. The commission also discussed potentially putting in a webcam instead of binoculars for wildlife viewing.

The commission will discuss with Public Works whether an adequate pullout can be created in that location on the same side as the transfer station for safe viewing. The commission discussed if so, from where the funding for the estimated \$5k for binoculars would come. The commission thought it might be a good idea to visit the model sites to see how the binoculars might work for Durham. They also discussed other town locations that the commission may want to highlight.

IX. Forest Health

Nick Lanzer, Professional Forester and member of the Conservation Commission, presented to the commission issues of forest health. He covered the history and context of changes within forests, including structural and compositional changes. Mr. Lanzer discussed the loss of native species due to disease, introduction of non-native species, and climate change; of particular note is the loss of ash trees due to the emerald ash borer blight, red pine at Doe Farm due to red pine scale, and hemlock due to woolly adelgid. Mr. Lanzer discussed the types of challenges forests face, including temporal/cyclical and

permanent challenges and the outlook for forests. Further, beech trees are being threatened by the beech bark disease and beech leaf disease. Mr. Lanzer included information about some strategies for addressing the current challenges facing forests. A Q&A session followed Mr. Lanzer's presentation in which the commission asked various questions related to the current forest climate and how Durham may best plan for future conservation of its forests.

X. Town Council Goals

The commission reviewed each of the Town Council goals for 2023 - 2024 and discussed how to connect the work of the Conservation Commission with the relevant Town Council goals. Of particular note are the connections between the second goal and the quality and safety of the town's water supply and the sixth goal and education around invasive species. Regarding goal seven, the commission discussed the potential to partner with Parks and Rec or the Stewardship Committee to increase educational offerings. Mr. Behrendt explained that the Town Council goals are generated in alignment with the Master Plan goals. Mr. Welsh explained that the Town Council is looking for the Conservation Commission to determine what specific actions the Conservation Commission could take in support of the Town Council goals. He further explained that the Master Plan is a ten-year plan, whereas the Town Council goals are the specific goals the town wants to focus on for the year. Chair Kritzer suggested the Conservation Commission develop a tactical plan at the August meeting.

Chair Kritzer is scheduled to go before the Town Council on 14 August and will use the Town Council goals as a framework for his presentation.

XI. Review of Minutes

The following changes should be made:

- The spelling of Mr. Kelley's name should be corrected throughout the document.
- In the Member's Present section, the spelling of Ms. Hardie Hale's second name should be amended to read Hardie and Chair Kritzer's name should have a "t" added.
- On page 2, "Rottner" should be corrected to "Rotner" and "woodships" should be corrected to "wood chips."

Mr. Kelley MOVED to ADOPT the minutes of May 22, 2023 as revised, which was SECONDED by Mr. Lanzer. The motion PASSED unanimously 7-0 through roll call vote: Mr. Welsh–Yes, Mr. Slepian–Yes, Mr. Trueblood–Yes, Chair Kritzer–Yes, Ms. Hardie Hale–Yes, Mr. Kelley–Yes, Mr. Lanzer–Yes.

XII. Other Business

No other business was discussed.

XIII. Roundtable

Mr. Slepian shared that he attended the May 24 Planning Board meeting and found the presentation by Bart McDonough, Newmarket Director of Planning and Community

Development, and Ellen Snyder, Chair of the Newmarket Conservation Commission, regarding trail connectivity interesting. He was impressed with their presentation and would like to start putting together this fall an actionable plan for Durham.

Mr. Welsh reported the Town Council has had three meetings since the last Conservation Commission meeting. On June 5, the council took action on the amendments to the zoning ordinances governing the Wetland Conservation Overlay District and the Shoreline Conservation Overlay District, which was well received and passed. Additionally, the council took action on making Dame Road a scenic road. On June 26, the council heard an update on the dam removal. It appears the earliest that project can begin will be the summer of next year, but given the work that needs to be done first, it is more likely to begin in the fall of 2024 or some time in 2025. In the most recent meeting, the council preserved the traditional indigenous foresting rights.

Mr. Kelley reported Technology Drive had a presentation at the Planning Board's last meeting and will return to the board for a site plan application for outdoor improvements. Additionally, the folks from Tideline appeared before the board for an amendment for their site plan to allow for small pop-up vendors. The board continues to work with the definitions and language in the zoning ordinances. The next meeting will be Wednesday night. How Durham's zoning ordinances will respond to the affordable housing issue may be in conflict with some of the town council's goals. Mr. Kelley will have more on that in the future.

Mr. Trueblood reported that the Wetlands and Shorelands Working Group is moving forward. They have three or four more sections to complete before they can merge the WCOD and SPOD documents. Currently they are working on the most difficult part, which is reviewing the buffer sizes, and will follow the science in making their decisions. They will put together some recommendations for the Conservation Commission to review that they hope will mitigate some issues. Mr. Trueblood is hoping the work will be completed by the fall.

The next Conservation Commission meeting will be Aug 28. The September meeting will be held on Monday, September 18 at the Police Station.

XIV. Adjourn (NLT 9:30 PM)

Mr. Welsh MOVED to adjourn the meeting. SECONDED by Ms. Hardie Hale. The motion PASSED unanimously 7-0 through roll call vote: Mr. Welsh–Yes, Mr. Slepian–Yes, Mr. Trueblood–Yes, Chair Kritzer–Yes, Ms. Hardie Hale–Yes, Mr. Kelley–Yes, Mr. Lanzer–Yes.

The meeting ADJOURNED at 9:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Daphne Chevalier