



**TOWN OF WINCHESTER
CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

Town of Winchester Town Hall 338 Main Street - 2nd Floor – P. Francis Hicks

December 9, 2021 – 5:00PM

Meeting Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairperson Jen Perga called the meeting to order at 5:00PM.

2. ROLL CALL:

The following individuals were present: Amanda Hill, Willard Platt, Renata Waldron, Joseph Ulevicus, and John Wiarda (5:30PM). Additionally, Wetlands Enforcement Officer/Zoning Enforcement Officer Michael Stankov was present.

Marc Gizzie was absent. Ms. Perga reported Mr. Gizzie had forwarded a notice of resignation to Town Manager Josh Kelly.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – SEPTEMBER 9, 2021 & OCTOBER 14, 2021 MEETINGS:

MOTION: Ms. Perga, Ms. Waldron second, to approve the September 9, 2021 minutes; Motion passed with Ms. Hill, Ms. Perga, Mr. Platt and Ms. Waldron voting in favor while Mr. Ulevicus abstained.

MOTION: Ms. Perga, Ms. Waldron second, to approve the October 14, 2021 minutes; Motion passed with Ms. Hill, Ms. Perga, Mr. Platt and Ms. Waldron voting in favor while Mr. Ulevicus abstained.

4. REVIEW HIGHLAND LAKE STUDY:

A water quality report, commissioned by the Highland Lake Watershed Association in partnership with the Town, prepared by Northeast Aquatic Research (NEAR), was reviewed by the commission. The report reviewed the long-term threats to Highland Lake after examining water samples collected over a period of time. It noted several potential problem areas of the lake, too.

Ms. Perga noted that NEAR provided recommendations that can be applied widespread, including along the Still River, Mad River, and Park Pond and that ideas put forth in the report could be utilized to strengthen regulations on protection and development. Ms. Hill questioned what mechanisms are available for requiring corrective actions on private development. Mr. Stankov explained that there are several properties whose driveways erode every time it rains, resulting in sediment flowing through the town's catch basins, and ultimately discharging into Highland Lake. He noted that there are ordinances already in place that would allow the Department of Public Works to fine people for the clean-up. Education and voluntary compliance is likely a better alternative though, according to Mr. Stankov.

Mr. Ulevicus, having not yet had an opportunity to read the report, questioned whether it contained any cited root causes that have potentially impacted the lake which may have led to the subsequent recommendations. Mr. Stankov was unsure but noted that the HLWA was concerned with unfettered growth in development and the plant blooms in the lake. Mr. Ulevicus noted the various contributors to the nutrient growth in the lake and reminding the commission how Highland Lake is spring fed, beginning in Third Bay, he noted that there were pockets within the lake where there is no spring movement, such as Holland Beach. He questioned what was driving the request for recommendations from NEAR. Mr. Platt explained that there were water quality records on Highland

Lake dating back to the 1930s. He noted the particular challenge the lake faced a couple of years ago with the breach of Sucker Brook Dam.

Ms. Perga reported that funds are available through grant opportunities with the Farmington River Coordinating Committee for water quality improvement projects. She noted that they would be more interested in the Still River because it was impaired.

Mr. Platt noted the report discussed preservation of the watershed around Highland Lake. He indicated that there were groups doing things like this such as the Winchester Land Trust having purchased a property that protects the watershed and the HLWA being in the process of also purchasing another property. Mr. Platt noted that it was a little distance away but was in an area that would still protect.

5. NARROW FOCUS/SET GOALS:

Pursuing grants was discussed as a possible goal for community gardens, land preservation, and wayfinding signs. It was noted that the wayfinding signs may have already been included with the first tranche of the town's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. Mr. Stankov noted the Town has a grants writer that this commission could submit a request to her for information on small conservation grants in the area. Ms. Waldron indicated that despite not having a great deal of experience with this, she would like to learn and assist in this regard.

Mr. Platt suggested the commission support land preservation, particularly the town-owned land around Highland Lake and any other lakes or ponds in town. Ms. Perga explained that the newspaper had covered a story that explains how theoretically the town could sell parcels that surround the drinking water source. She noted that the Conservation Commission could make recommendations as Winchester will soon be considering this for property near Crystal Lake and Rugg Brook Reservoir. She suggested that this could be recommended for the town-owned Highland Lake properties.

The consensus of the commission was that Ms. Hill, with the assistance of Ms. Perga, would draft a letter indicating its support of preservation of these town-owned properties near these water bodies. It was agreed that the contact information for the Town's grants writer, Alison Pierce, would be forwarded to Ms. Hill and Ms. Perga.

Ms. Perga questioned whether Winsted Trails Chairman Ric Nalette had ever written his material that he had shared on the various organized walks. Discussion ensued on the work that Mr. Nalette, along with former Economic Development Commission Chairman Phillip Allen, had done with City Walk. It was agreed that there might be an opportunity to record those sessions and get some of that information documented. Ms. Perga agree to reach out to Mr. Nalette for that purpose with the intention of including some of that for signage.

6. ADJOURN.

MOTION: Mr. Wiarda, Ms. Waldron second, to adjourn at 6:10PM; unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Pamela A. Colombie
Recording Clerk