

Enfield Conservation Commission – Meeting Minutes
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS/MICROSOFT
TEAMS PLATFORM
March 7, 2024

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Leigh Davis (via Teams), Shirley Green (Chair), Jean Hinshaw (via Teams), Edward Rippe (Vice-Chair), Kate Plumley Stewart (Selectboard Representative), Carol Wyman, John Welenc

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: Rob Taylor, Land Use and Community Development Administrator, Whitney Banker-Recording Secretary

GUESTS: Jerrold Theis, Liz Kelly (Resilience), Crystal Kidd (Resilience)

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair Green called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and took attendance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

APPROVE MEETING MINUTES: January 4, 2024

Mr. Welenc moved to approve the January 4, 2024, minutes as amended. Mr. Rippe seconded. Vote in favor of the motion with one abstention (4-0-1).

Amendments:

Line 17 – Theis to Green

Ms. Hinshaw arrived at the meeting via Teams.

MASTER PLAN DISCUSSIONS: Resilience Planning and Design (contractor)

Mr. Taylor provided an overview of the history of Enfield's Master Plan and the current plan and development phase II.

Ms. Davis arrived at the meeting via Teams.

The five chapters of phase II are recreation, heritage/preservation, energy/sustainability, conservation, and municipal facilities and services.

Mr. Taylor introduced the planning consultant representatives, Ms. Kelly and Ms. Kidd. Ms. Kelly provided a brief overview of tonight's meeting goals and the discussion questions they had prepared beforehand.

Notable open spaces and undeveloped land in Enfield:

Mr. Welenc said the water bodies in town come to mind for him. The lakes, rivers, and other water bodies. Clean water is vital.

Ms. Wyman shared that discussions in town are intensifying on housing and development in the downtown area. She said that she felt creating green spaces before much development takes place is a priority. Lakeside Park is an example of a recently developed green space in this area that has been very popular for recreation and teaching.

Mr. Rippe echoed that the lakes and rivers are a high priority and that there are many concerns about water quality and runoff.

Ms. Davis said that wetlands, especially George Pond along Bog Road. She feels wetland encroachment has been an ongoing issue, and the wetland setback voted in at last year's town meeting was a good step. She highlighted protecting wetlands in the face of loosening policies at the state level and the importance of keeping wetlands safe at the local level.

Ms. Green agreed that keeping wetlands and working together with those in town and the state.

Ms. Hinshaw said that she is a newer resident of Enfield and agrees that keeping water quality is highly important. She also stated that wildlife is a high priority, and the town should consider them alongside the changes that occur with housing, roadways, traffic, etc.

Ms. Stewart agreed that the water and lakes in town tend to be a very popular recreation area. She also stated that the mountains surrounding the town and the runoff that can occur are important to consider. Ms. Stewart also highlighted the conserved lands in town and their critical roles in recreation, wildlife, and preservation.

Existing conserved lands as viewed by the conservation commission:

Ms. Kelly asked for a brief overview of the town's conserved lands and how they are managed.

Mr. Theis asked if the consultants had a copy of the commission's Natural Resources Inventory. They confirmed they have copies and have been using them as a resource. Mr. Welenc expanded to explain that this document provides a good rundown of the conserved lands.

Town's biggest land and water protection accomplishments and items to work on in the last ten years:

82 Ms. Stewart said that looking at the minutes for the town reports would also be a helpful
83 resource for accomplishments.

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85 Ms. Wyman said two accomplishments that stand out to her are the milfoil project (which has
86 been very successful) and the lake host program (run by the NH Lakes Association since 2002).
87 Ms. Green expanded to explain the lake host program, which trains individuals and stations them
88 at boat launches to check boats in/out to check for invasive species and provide educational
89 pamphlets.

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91 Ms. Davis said that Mr. Welenc's educational program, which was recently launched in the
92 schools, has been a great success. She also stated that having public informational sessions, often
93 held at the Enfield Shaker Museum, has been an accomplishment. Former commission chair, Mr.
94 Theis, has kept the commission up to speed with changes at the NH Department of
95 Environmental Services (DES).

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97 Ms. Green said that having an Enfield trails master was another recent project that has been very
98 successful for the town.

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100 Ms. Stewart stated that Enfield has been a Tree City each year, which helps showcase the
101 importance of conservation within the town. There have also been invasive species workshops
102 that teach how to identify and remove invasives both along and away from water. Ms. Green
103 echoed that for a long time, invasive species within the lakes were a large focus, and now
104 focusing on the land invasives is also important.

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106 Ms. Stewart highlighted the Soak Up the Rain NH efforts that the commission has worked on
107 and the positive community outreach and education that has taken place.

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109 Ms. Stewart also shared updates that the Department of Public Works (DPW) has done,
110 including improvements to ditching in town.

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112 Ms. Stewart highlighted that Enfield's Health Officer has been very involved in keeping up with
113 problems that include cyanobacteria, working closely with the lake associations, and addressing
114 septic system failure or inadequacy issues.

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116 Mr. Taylor added the expansion of the town's municipal sewer system, including the large
117 development of Lakeview on Route 4A. The town worked with the Homeowner's Association
118 on this. Many homes in this area between the prior end of the system and this expansion have
119 private systems but could connect at some point. Ms. Stewart added ideas to investigate ways to
120 make hooking up to the system more affordable as septic systems age.

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Mr. Taylor shared the acquisition of lands previously owned by the railroad, now known as Lakeside Park, along the lake. The town plans to model good lake stewardship, remediate invasives, provide educational opportunities, etc. Ms. Green added that the goal of this park is to be a lake-friendly example. Mr. Taylor added that this preserves public access to the water, where much of that land is privately owned.

Ms. Davis added that the DPW sent in a representative regarding the most environmentally friendly way to salt the roads and listened to feedback given by the commission to improve this. Ms. Green suggested that low-salt areas along the lakes might also be helpful to establish in the future. Mr. Taylor added that a dust control program for the roads also helps minimize runoff and material movement.

For what still needs to be done, Mr. Taylor said that he felt implementing a regulation for waterfront protection that requires maintenance of septic systems along waterfront areas would be a significant improvement for the lakes. Members agreed that this would be a significant improvement.

Mr. Taylor also shared that dog waste has become a large problem, particularly for runoff to the lakes (as well as in other recreational open spaces throughout town). Ms. Stewart suggested handing out the composting pick-up bags to help address this. This would help the commission hold community members accountable. Ms. Wyman also agreed education campaigns would be useful around this issue.

Ms. Stewart said that the rain garden education and tools are a high priority for improvements, including what incentives could be implemented to have a positive impact here. This will also beautify the town.

Ms. Stewart said that the storm drains and education around that they go to the lake versus not the municipal sewer system and not to put waste materials in them. She suggested painting that could be done to explain this on the drains themselves and provide education.

Mr. Taylor added the fertilizer issue and restrictions around using them, especially near water bodies. Ms. Stewart suggested education about available pumps that can help those who want to utilize lake water as fertilizer. Ms. Stewart also said that another issue is mowing down to the lake, which encourages geese and erosion. She suggested education around this at the farmer's markets.

Future priorities:

Ms. Wyman stated that cyanobacteria has become an increasing issue that needs to be addressed as a priority. Five warnings were issued last summer regarding cyanobacteria outbreaks.

Ms. Green stated that individual community members take stormwater runoff measures, and education about this is important. Ms. Stewart added that incentivizing community members to take these measures is a key priority.

Mr. Welenc stated that the fertilizer issue and potential buffer zones or bans near the lakes were priorities. Ms. Stewart agreed and suggested a campaign from the commission regarding fertilizing with lake water. Mr. Rippe added the importance of replacing lawns with native species. Ms. Stewart suggested giving away free seeds as part of education. Ms. Davis suggested a contest for “ugliest lawn.” Ms. Stewart suggested, “frugal, not fancy.” Ms. Green added the NH Lake Smart program, which the town could participate in.

Recreation:

Ms. Kelly asked for any further thoughts regarding outdoor recreation. Ms. Stewart suggested including Craig Sanborn, the town’s Trail Master, in conversations about this. She also suggested education about avoiding recreation during mud seasons.

Ms. Green invited Mr. Theis to participate in the discussion as a longtime member of the commission.

Mr. Theis said that understanding the carrying capacity of a community is essential. This includes providing resources to support existing populations (humans and wildlife). Quality of air, shelter, food, and water are vital. Keeping the carrying capacity in mind should be critical for the town. Mr. Theis stated that the recent drilling of additional wells for the municipal water system and pipe upgrades need to be considered. He also indicated trash production as another issue, including trucking impacts outside of town. Mr. Theis said that he felt educating community members on the welfare of both people and wildlife, as well as the town’s ecosystem and value, is very important as part of the master plan. He suggested thinking 25-50+ years from now and what the community could look like based on what priorities are held by community members.

Mr. Welenc agreed that understanding the consequences of bad land ethics is vital for the community.

Ms. Stewart also highlighted the area's housing crisis and the importance of providing housing in areas like downtown (which goes hand-in-hand with the housing importance of the first phase of the master plan), as well as infrastructure for less driving, more walking, and access to transportation and services. She agreed that the town needs to be more cautious with development around the lakes and the necessary guardrails that zoning can provide to avoid development in areas far away from infrastructure and services. Ms. Green agreed that development in central areas of town would provide housing and help conserve lands further away from services.

Ms. Stewart also highlighted discussions around zoning regarding housing units per lot and accessory dwelling units (ADUs) as ways the community has been creative about housing access and continues to work on it.

Ms. Davis asked if there is a limit on the amount of water available for public use and if there is a limit on the amount of sewer that can be pumped to Lebanon. Ms. Stewart replied that yes, there are limits. For water, there are several limitations, such as quality and speed. There is a contract for sewers with exactly how many gallons can be shipped. Currently, only about 1/3 of that limit is utilized. Mr. Theis commented about concerns regarding large municipal water system users, such as the two car washes recently added to the town and their long-term impact on the wells. Mr. Taylor confirmed that both utilize reverse osmosis to recycle water. Ms. Stewart also added the impact of at-home washes, including chemical runoff, and the fact that the car wash's effect on the system is minimal. Ms. Green said that it is essential to know where aquifers are and protect them.

Ms. Hinshaw said that it seems that, ideally, a conservation plan goes hand-in-hand with the master plan that looks at all aspects of the town, takes a longer view of the future resource needs, and fosters a reasonable quality of life. She said the actions being taken need to fit together as one system. She suggested a 25-year look at the water systems, weather projections, etc., and how to work backward to what the commission can do now to build a culture where conservation is a high priority throughout the community.

Mr. Theis added the importance of considering neighboring community impacts and Enfield's resources.

Barriers to increasing land conservation and natural resource protection in town:

Ms. Kelly stated that lack of education has been a theme throughout tonight's discussions. She asked for further comments.

Ms. Davis stressed the importance of collaborating with the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) and Planning Board (PB) to align conservation priorities with these bodies involved in the town's land development. She felt that working together could strengthen the commission and these boards.

Mr. Welenc said that financial fear is often a barrier he sees to conservation (more development providing more tax revenue is often a higher priority).

Ms. Stewart said that dealing with the state of NH is a barrier she encounters, particularly on the Select Board (SB) side of things. It can take a long time to get permits, and many restrictions often impact the town's ability to make good community decisions. Mr. Theis agreed that this is

an ongoing issue and highlighted the importance of electing representatives prioritizing these issues (state and local elections).

Ms. Stewart also stated that the cost barriers to “do the right thing” come into play. She wondered about further education around septic system updates (for example) and the town's financial resources to help individuals apply. Mr. Theis added that testing for septic system contamination around the lake and the way these systems impact water quality is vital to consider (as discussed earlier). He stated that many formerly small, camp-type dwellings are being upgraded to large, year-round dwellings with a more significant impact on existing, older septic systems. Mr. Rippe asked if septic requirements have changed in the past 20 years since he purchased his home and had to have the septic system approved before he could finance it. Ms. Stewart noted that cash transfers of properties don’t have a septic review requirement in the same way financed transfers do. Many recent cash transfers have occurred in the area, particularly around the lakes.

Any additional comments can be sent to Mr. Taylor, who will forward them to the contractors at Resilience.

Mr. Taylor shared the upcoming public input sessions for the master plan: May 9 and May 11, 2024.

After the public events, community members can also share thoughts and comments electronically.

NEW BUSINESS:

Health Officer:

Ms. Stewart shared that the SB recently had their annual presentation from Health Officer Mr. Ehrenzweig, and she felt that his information about the lakes, cyanobacteria, etc., would be helpful for the commission. She asked if the commission would like to have Mr. Ehrenzweig come to a future meeting to discuss this. All members agreed this was a great idea.

Earth Day:

Ms. Green asked members to consider ways to celebrate Earth Day on April 22 and forward ideas to her ahead of the April 4 meeting.

Mr. Welenc suggested cleanup as a priority, which often happens at this time.

Ms. Stewart suggested having ‘junior conservation member’ stickers to encourage family participation in clean-up days.

286 **OTHER BUSINESS**287 **Soak Up the Rain:**

288 Ms. Fried had asked if the commission could reschedule this with the University of New
289 Hampshire (UNH) when there is less groundwater from snow melt. Members agreed that it
290 would be good to reschedule. Ms. Stewart will notify Ms. Fried.

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292 **Lake Dredging:**

293 Mr. Rippe said that following a previous conversation about the high amount of sediment in the
294 lakes, he has put together some contacts that may be good to work with on this issue. Mr. Rippe
295 and Ms. Wyman will partner on further research regarding this issue.

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297 Ms. Stewart suggested also researching a soil scientist who can pull samples and provided some
298 additional contacts to Ms. Wyman and Mr. Rippe.

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300 **NEXT MEETING:** April 4, 2024

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302 **ADJOURNMENT:**

303 Ms. Stewart moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:52 pm. Ms. Wyman seconded.

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305 The meeting was adjourned at 8:52 pm.