Bethlehem Conservation Commission (BCC) Meeting

May 27, 2021, 6 pm

Zoom Meeting

Minutes

Present: Lindsay Webb, Cheryl Jensen, Alternate Marilyn Johnson, Linda Moore, Vivian Winterhoff, Margaret Gale

Absent: Nicole McGrath

Guests: None.

Lindsay called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm.

### Past meeting minutes

April 22 2021 meeting minutes:

Margaret motioned to approve, Cheryl seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

April 30 2021 meeting minutes:

Linda motioned to approve, Cheryl seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

May 16 2021 meeting minutes:

Cheryl motion to approve, Lindsay seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

### Treasurer’s report

Margaret reported that at the end of May 2021 there are $14,917.20 in the Bethlehem Conservation Commission (BCC) savings account. This does not yet reflect the money that Elise Lawson will be paid for her work on the Presidential Mountain Resort wetlands permit application so far. The Town account is unchanged. Roadside clean-up costs will be drawn from the Town account.

### Mail items

* **Lancaster Conservation Commission** **requested the Northern Pass Wetlands Report**

They are hiring Elise Lawson in connection with some work Eversource is doing on power lines. Cheryl forwarded them the report.

* **AHEAD property**

It was noted: NHDES letter to AHEAD approving Restoration Plan with conditions and a separate letter from NHDES to AHEAD requesting additional wetland/stream restoration work.

* **Presidential Mountain Resort (PMR)**

NHDES denied the expedited wetlands permit and will proceed with standard processing times (NHDES File Number: 2021-01273). Our comments on the application were sent to NHDES in time for them to include the comments into their request for more information (NHDES File Number: 2021-01273). Joe Schmidl from NHDES Water Division referred to each of the points we made, and that was appreciated. It was also appreciated that local input was valued. “Conservation Commissions are the eyes and ears of DES” is stated on the NHDES website. Lindsay has written back to him to thank him for his promptness and expression of appreciation. The timeline for PMR to get information back to NHDES is July 16th 2021.

Cheryl asked if we knew of a date for the NHDES site visit. There are some indications on the property (visible from Route 302) that work is going ahead soon. There was discussion about the BCC requesting a site visit and inviting Elise Lawson or a specialist who knows what to look for to attend. Such requests, according to NHDES, are rarely turned down by the owner. Elise Lawson would need to be asked if she would be our representative during a site visit.

Cheryl made motion for the BCC to contact PMR to tell them that a wetland scientist would like to conduct a site visit. Linda amended the motion: the BCC would like a wetlands scientist to conduct a site visit. Vivian amended further: One or more BCC members will attend as well. Linda seconded. Motion moved, approved unanimously.

It was agreed that Margaret would ask Elise Lawson first, then a BCC member would contact PMR (via David Eckman), once Elise confirms. Lindsay will notify all members once a date has been set.

Linda reported that Cheryl updated the Select Board at a recent Board meeting regarding the situation with PMR and not approaching us to sign the expedited wetlands permit.

* **Adair Inn property forestry permit by notification**

This was noted. There was a general discussion around forestry practices and the importance of the Town hiring/working with a competent consulting forester to oversee all the logging apparently happening in town.

* **HB177**

It was noted that the bill had been defeated in the Senate.

### Old business

* **Roadside clean-up wrap-up**

Cheryl reported that 45 volunteers (including 6 BCC members) showed up. Approx. 140 bags of trash were picked up. Bethlehem Trails Association on Rt 3 even picked up a toilet, a cooler and “enough parts to make up a small car”.

It appears that some people picked up trash after those collecting filled blue bags had driven around to do so; there were some bags on Wing Rd that had not been picked up and that some bears unfortunately got into. There were also trash bags on a road that the BCC didn’t assign during the roadside clean-up.

A thank you to volunteers was posted on the BCC Facebook page with volunteers’ names, and a letter to Bethlehem residents was published in today’s Littleton Courier. NCES was named in both thank you notes. Lindsay will send an email to Bruce Glover at NCES whom she was in touch with to provide the bin for the trash bags to be received. No purchases were made, so no money was spent.

Lindsay would like roadside clean-up to go on agenda in early fall to start organizing then, so that we can pre-order for example bright green or yellow bandanas and incorporating the new “just be Bethlehem” motto into any “merchandise”. She would also like to review the budget, in light of limited expenditure in the last two years. Margaret said it would be good to buy something sustainable in line with BCC values. Lindsay also added that while she was aware of this being potentially just another piece of trash, it would be good to hand people a little map with the assigned route highlighted, so they don’t get confused about where to go.

Cheryl will update the to-do list and remove any now irrelevant items. Lindsay will share her to-do list from this year with Cheryl, so that can be incorporated.

### Town forest update

Vivian, Linda and Lindsay went out on May 2nd and started to flag a loop. Lindsay then revisited the flagged trail with her husband, who is knowledgeable about trailbuilding, where there were questions around where a trail could go. It was good to go at this time of year because it was before it started to leaf out.

Lindsay will be in touch with Linda and Vivian again to go out around mid-June. If anyone else wants to join, they should let Lindsay know. Linda suggested that perhaps someone knowledgeable like Lindsay’s husband could be hired to do some work for the BCC on developing walking trails.

There was some discussion around putting out for a bid the walking/hiking trail design and some of the heavier work, such as building a small bridge to cross the brook. Volunteer days could be organized, but there are spots where small bridges will be needed for example, and other spots where hiring someone could be needed.

Engaging the Bethlehem Trail Association (BTA) to help with trail building was raised. BTA do mainly single-track bike trails as opposed to walking trails. It needs to be a walking/hiking trail first and then possibly have bikes on it. We could also have a dedicated area biking trails area and have trails specifically for mountain bikes. Linda suggested (again) we have Jim McCann come and talk to the BCC about that at a future meeting, and then a decision can be made.

### Other/New business

* **Leachate spill at NCES landfill**

The BCC has not been contacted by NHDES. Lindsay read that it might have been the largest spill in NH. It happened over a weekend so it did not get caught quickly. Lindsay mentioned that she and Leslie Bergum will soon be testing Ammonoosuc River water from Mt Washington base road all the way to Bath, NH as part of ongoing water quality testing for the Ammonoosuc River Advisory Committee. NHDES sends someone to sample the section by the Bridge that is closest to where the landfill is (Lindsay and Leslie will not sample there). Monitoring happens on the river on a regular basis.

* **Possible Aquifer Ordinance Violation**

A number of years ago the Town passed an aquifer ordinance to protect aquifers. At one point in the past, the Town’s planning board gave permission to a company to build two bunkers to store sand and salt on River Rd. Recently a possible aquifer ordinance violation was reported, as salt was spilling out of one of the bunkers. It was established that the Town is responsible for following up. Dave Wiley went out and sent a letter to the owner to clean up the salt that was outside of bunker and it was cleaned up. Aquifer ordinance is that salt cannot be stored in an outside area. The BCC does not need to be involved.

* **Going back to in person meetings**

Lindsay reported that Nicole had said that we can continue to meet remotely while we are still in a state of emergency, but when that changes we have to have a plan in place for in-person meetings where the majority of people are present in person. The plan could include meeting outside, or it could be a hybrid meeting (including the options of Zoom). The Library may not be letting groups use their meeting room yet. Linda suggested that we could use the Town Hall. She will check if the Town Hall is available for the BCC’s next meeting. The Town Hall currently has a mask-wearing requirement. All members who were present said that they were comfortable meeting in person.

* **Anonymous complaint regarding work at 3447 Main St**

Linda reported that Bruce Caplain (Bethlehem Selectman) had contacted her to say he had received a complaint about 3447 Main St. There is a brook that runs through the property. There is a lot of work happening in the area, which is visible from Rt 302. However, it is hard to see exactly what is going on. Lindsay said there is a complaint form issued by NHDES that the person complaining can complete. They can request to remain anonymous publicly, but NHDES needs to know who is complaining.

It was established that this is the same property that was previously brought up in a complaint and that the BCC investigated in November 2020 by walking along the railroad bed and taking photos. Linda volunteered to contact NH DES to find out what the best approach is.

Cheryl motioned that regarding the complaint about 3447 Main St the BCC give permission to Linda to do what NHDES says is the right thing to do to file a complaint. Lindsay seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously. Linda will keep BCC members updated.

### Next meeting

Next meeting is June 24th. There will be no July meeting unless something comes up.

*Cheryl moved to end the meeting at 7:23 pm, Linda seconded, motion passed unanimously.*

Meeting adjourned, 7:23pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Vivian Winterhoff