**Bethlehem Conservation Commission (BCC) meeting**

**June 22nd, 2023**

**Meeting minutes**

**Location:** Library

**Committee members present:** Chery Jensen, Margaret Gale, Betsey Phillips, Ivan Ash, Veronica Morris, Rachelle Lyons, Vivian Winterhoff

Cheryl called the meeting to order at 5.32pm.

**Meeting minutes**

**Margaret made a motion to approve the April 20th, 2023 meeting minutes. Ivan seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.**

**Incoming mail**

 **Stripe mystery payments**

Vivian reported that the BCC had received three emails from Stripe, which looked legitimate and indicated that the BCC Gmail address had been used to purchase a digital currency (Ethereum) on three separate occasions between June 12th and June 14th for the same amount of money ($685.47). The emails had been forwarded to the Police Department and the Town Administrator. The BCC’s accounts have not been affected and the BCC does not have a credit or bank card.

**Geosphere Environmental Management letter dated May 8th**

The letter confirms the submission of the final report for the groundwater withdrawal permit application by Littleton Water and Light.

A BCC member noted that questionnaires had been sent to residents and water monitoring was happening around the area of the proposed water withdrawal.

There was discussion on whether the BCC should comment or intervene. It was decided that nothing can be done at present.

NHDES sent the company a letter identifying some issues in their process. Refer to incoming email dated 05/31/2023.

**Research on social impacts of mountain biking in the Northeastern forest region**

The email inviting an interview was forwarded to Bruce Caplain who has been involved in mountain biking in the area.

**NCES restoration project**

This project caused seep problems when it was last done in 2010. Arsenic was found last time. There has been no news on proposed dates for a site visit yet, as referred to in the email.

**Gwen Selleck wetlands application (hardcopy), Parker Rd, tax map #202, lot 39**

Noted.

**Ginny Jeffreys wildflower walk for Conservation Commission members**

Vivian and Rachelle attended. It was a fantastic walk!

**Treasurer’s report**

The BCC’s account balances are as follows:

Town account: $870.00 (no expenditure since last meeting)

Savings account: $17,476.25

Cheryl issued a check to Super Secret Ice-Cream for the ice-cream tokens used at the roadside clean-up in May. She will bring it to the next meeting.

**Roadside Clean-up**

A report needs to be compiled. Fewer people attended, but it appears that more trash was collected this year.

Vivian will email NCES to get the info on how much was collected.

Some members thought it worthwhile to continue, as it fosters the stewardship ethic in our Town and this is currently the only public-facing event we put on.

A question to ask could be: What other community-facing events could we have? Could we have a (speaker) program ahead of time to start to raise awareness of Clean-Up Day?

A further idea could be to organize special waste collection (e.g. Styrofoam, certain batteries).

It would be great to announce the event via North Country Community Radio next year.

**Town Sustainability Committee update**

Rachelle reported that the Committee had been officially formed. A mission and vision had been created. This coming Tuesday they will be discussing a visibility project to involve the community. Key areas of focus are: Food, Waste, Energy, Transportation and another two.

**Invasives management grant**

Veronica communicated with Brett (Bethlehem Road Agent) who is willing for Highway Department employees to be trained.

**Vivian made a motion to request the Select Board to send a letter of support to the Upper Connecticut CISMA for invasive species management. Ivan seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**

Vivian will email Sam to let him know.

**Federal Restoration grants**

 **Fish and Wildlife 40k grant for a local project**

ALAC and ACT don’t have any projects at present.

The Bethlehem Heritage Society has a project: An area that was recently disturbed as part of a culvert project on Route 302, and could use some restoration and making the small park area more welcoming and accessible. Funding this project would also prevent the Heritage Society building from continuously flooding.

Another two projects were discussed: Making the town-owned fishing spot on the Ammonoosuc River more easily accessible to pedestrians and scoping the removal of the former town dam.

Rachelle will reach out to Latice who contacted us from US Fish & Wildlife about the grant opportunity to find out more about their preferences and requirements.

Veronica will reach out to the landowner of the dam in case the funding is “leaning” towards that project.

**It was agreed that in order to meet the USFW application submission deadline of July 21st, 2023, the date of the next meeting would be moved forward to Wednesday July 12th, 6pm.** Margaret will book the room at the Town Library.

 **Other federal funding**

Rachelle will be attending a meeting on Tuesday in which she will find out more about a much larger potential project.

**NHACC legislative update: Wetlands permitting proposed changes**

**Ivan made a motion to let Barbara Richter know that the BCC wishes to file a comment specifically regarding the wetlands restoration funds. Priority should continue to be given to using the funds locally. Cheryl seconded. Motion unanimously approved.**

Cheryl will email Barbara Richter from NHACC who will in turn give input at the public hearing.

**PFAS and dioxane leaking into the Ammonoosuc**

There was discussion around how to approach the issues raised. Monitoring wells on Prospect St at the Town Forest are “clean”.

It was proposed that the BCC talk to the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF) as they recently settled with Casella.

Cheryl will reach out to the CLF.

**Wetlands review guidance and assistance**

To be discussed at the next meeting.

**Sharing ongoing responsibilities of Chair role**

Certain responsibilities were divided up among members.

**Setting up BCC email address with @bethlehemnh.org**

Setting up the BCC’s email under the Town’s email address umbrella with the suffix @bethlehemnh.org (and thereby discontinuing the use of the BCC’s gmail address) would cost $7.50 per month, which amounts to $90 per year. This would give the BCC access to the Office 365 suite, including the ability to share files among members, like a digital filing cabinet.

Complying with 91-A open records request would be easier, and it would help with transitions between Chairs.

**Cheryl made a motion to set up a BCC email address at bethlehemnh.org for $7.50 per month (or $90 per year). Betsey seconded.**

Vivian will email Mary to go ahead with setting up.

**Other/New Business**

**Reserving the right to comment on future landfill applications to NHDES**

**Vivian made a motion for Cheryl to be the designated person from the BCC to let NHDES know that, when Granite State Landfill submits permit applications to NHDES, the BCC wishes to reserve the right to comment on the applications.**

**Betsey seconded. Motion unanimously passed.**

**Next BCC meeting**

Wednesday, July 12th , 2023 at 6pm.

**Cheryl made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:41pm. Ivan seconded. Motion unanimously passed.**

**The meeting was adjourned at 7:41pm.**

Respectfully submitted by Vivian Winterhoff, Recording Secretary.