Bethlehem Conservation Commission Minutes

February 13, 2025

Bethlehem Public Library

Present: Cheryl Jensen, Rachelle Lyons, Ivan Ash, Margaret Gale.

Joanne Jones and Chris Jensen (alternates).

The meeting began at 5:05 p.m. with Ms. Jensen appointing Ms. Jones and Mr. Jensen as voting members.

The minutes of January 16, 2025 were reviewed. Mr. Ash made a motion to approve them. It was seconded by Ms. Jensen and unanimously approved.

**Natural Resources Inventory**

It was noted that the Natural Resources Inventory (NRI) invoice from Elise Lawon (Watershed to Wildlife) is $4,800, which will come from the commission’s savings account. There was a discussion about meeting with Ms. Lawson to discuss the report before having a public presentation. It was decided that it would be best if the commission discussed the report at its next meeting and then shared thoughts with Elise before meeting with her.

**The Town Forest**

There was a discussion about the town forest and it was agreed that the commission has many decisions to make.

One is whether to cut any timber and – if so – how much. One possibility would be to cut small areas to provide a different wildlife habitat. But there was some concern about the damage that would be done by skid trails, even if a small area was cut. Ms. Jones said there is a trend towards letting forests grow old.

There was also a discussion about making trails. One question was whether they were necessary since there are trails nearby at Bretzfelder..

There was interest in having the University of New Hampshire Extension Service forester walk the forest and share his thoughts. Ms. Jones said she would contact him about a visit.

**Resignations**

Ms. Jensen read the following statement from Betsey Phillips:

*“It’s with sadness and regret that I have to submit this letter of resignation to the Bethlehem Conservation Commission. Aside from the fact that we’re moving to Montana in the future, I now have a health issue that will prevent me from being a reliable, working member of the commission. I have truly enjoyed my time as a member of this group. Bethlehem is a gem of a town. It has been a privilege and an honor to be able to work with so many knowledgeable people who are invested in keeping Bethlehem beautiful and its lands, water and skies healthy.”*

Ms. Phillip’s term was scheduled to end on March 31, 2026.

The commission thanked Ms. Phillips for her help and dedication. Ms. Jones made a motion to ask the select board to accept her resignation. Mr. Ash seconded that motion. It passed unanimously.

Ms. Jensen said that Vivian Winterhoff’s informed the commission that her workload means that she will not be able to participate as an alternate. Ms. Gale made a motion to ask the select board to accept her resignation. It was seconded by Ms. Lyons and unanimously passed.

**Appointments**

Ms. Jensen went over membership appointments.

Rachelle Lyon’s term ends on March 31, 2025. Mr. Jensen made a motion to ask the select board to reappoint her for a three-year term ending on March 31, 2028. It was seconded by Mr. Ash and unanimously approved.

Mr. Ash has informed the commission that he would prefer to be an alternate, rather than continue as a full member when his term ends on March 31, 2025. Mr. Jensen made a motion to ask the select board to accept Mr. Ash’s appointment as an alternate when his current term as a member ends. It was seconded by Ms. Gale and unanimously adopted.

Ms. Jones wishes to resign as an alternate when her term ends on March 31, 2025 to become a full member. Ms. Gale made a motion to ask the select board to accept her resignation as an alternate. It was seconded by Mr. Jensen and unanimously passed.

Ms. Jensen made a motion to ask the select board to appoint Ms. Jones as a full member for a three-year term that will end on March 31, 2028. It was seconded by Ms. Gale and unanimously passed.

Ms. Jensen made a motion to ask the select board to appoint Veronica Morris as a full member when her select-board term ends on March 12. It would be for a two-year term ending on March 31, 2027. It was seconded by Mr. Jensen and unanimously passed.

**Sign and Lighting Regulations**

There was a discussion about getting more information to voters before the election on March 11th. It was noted that the mailers went to the post office on Feb. 15th and information was included in the January 31st edition of “Our Town News: Bethlehem NH.”

Ms. Jensen said the Sustainability Working Group and the Energy Commission have promised to write letters-to-the-editor. Ms. Lyons said she and Douglas Arion have drafted an article on light pollution.

**Crypto Mining**

Ms. Jensen alerted the commission to House Bill 639 which she said would allow unfettered digital access mining regardless of the noise or environmental impact.

**Next Meeting: March 20th at 5 p.m. at town hall.**

**The meeting ended.**