Bethlehem Conservation Commission Minutes

January 16, 2025

5 p.m. Bethlehem Public Library

(Minutes by Chris Jensen)

**Attendees:** Cheryl Jensen, Veronica Morris (select board liaison), Ivan Ash, Rachelle Lyons, Margaret Gale. Joanne Jones and Chris Jensen (alternates).

**Guests:** Mary and John Polaski. Rosalind Page.

**Alternate appointment**

Ms. Jensen appointed Ms. Jones a voting member since Betsey Phillips was unable to attend.

**Treasurer’s Report**

Ms. Gale said the savings account has $17,411 and seventy-eight cents. That does not include the $2,973 from the land-use change tax. After paying the annual dues for The New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions, there is a $250 deficit in the appropriations/checking account. That will be remedied later this year when the 2025 budget is approved by voters and the commission’s 2025 allotment is available.

**Ammonoosuc Conservation Trust Update**

Ms. Page said ACT has decided to go ahead with the purchase of the 747 acres in Bethlehem, including 2.5 miles fronting the river. She said a review of the parcel owned by “The 750 Club” found “nothing egregious.” The non-profit is now seeking funding, she said.

The commission discussed the contents of a letter-of-support, which it previously agreed to provide. Ms. Lyons offered to draft the letter, sign it on behalf of the commission and send it to ACT.

There was a discussion of whether the commission should use tax dollars to make a donation to the fund-raising effort. As an alternative to tax dollars, Ms. Lyons raised the possibility of offering volunteer time, working on the parcel. Ms. Page said that was a great idea and it would help with ACT’s grant applications by showing support from Bethlehem.

Ms. Lyons made a motion that the commission offer 150 volunteer hours over two years. Using federal guidelines for hourly work, that would be about $5,000. It was seconded by Ms. Jones and unanimously approved.

**Minutes**

There were several changes to the minutes of Dec. 19, 2024. Ms. Gale made a motion to approved them and Mr. Ash seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Annual Report Draft**

The last paragraph was reviewed, tweaked and approved to be forwarded to the town office.

**Lighting and Sign Ordinances**

There was a discussion about the two proposed zoning regulations and several changes aimed at clarification were made.

Ms. Jensen noted that the planning board’s public hearing would be continued and January 22. She said she would attend for a discussion on the warrant-article text.

The commission agreed that the amendments are so important to conservation that a communications plan is needed to make sure voters understand the issue.

Ms. Lyons said she and Douglas Arion are planning an evening program at the town library, including a Zoom option. She said they would also offer at article to the local newspapers as well as The Union Leader.

Ms. Jensen said it is important to get letters-to-the editor and raised the issue of who would write them. She said another possibility was a mailer to every resident.

Mr. Jensen said he researched the cost of a mailer. The cost for paper, double-sided color printing, help from a graphic designer and postage would be just under $800. It would reach every mailbox in Bethlehem.

Given the short deadline, Mr. Jensen said one possibility was that Ms. Lyons, Ms. Jensen and he could draft the mailer.

Ms. Jensen made the motion to approve a mailer at the cost “no more than $800.” Mr. Ash seconded the motion.

Ms. Gale said she was not in favor of spending the money because she pays so little attention to flyers arriving in the mail. Mr. Jensen said many people may not pay attention to flyers at a political time of the year, but there have been town elections in which items passed – or failed – by a handful of votes.

The motion passed, with Ms. Gale voting against.

**Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be at 5 p.m. on February 13th at the library.

**Adjournment**

Ms. Jensen made a motion to adjourn. It was seconded by Mr. Ash and unanimously approved. The meeting ended at 7:09 p.m.