



Bennington Conservation Commission

January 20, 2022, 6:30 PM

ZOOM Meeting

Attend tune in on Zoom at

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/9821088816?pwd=VXF6cG5KUEdHQ285djZ3Qy9yWEV0UT09>

Personal ID 982 108 8816

Called to Order at 6:38

Present: at Town Hall: Jon Manley, Tom James, Mike Munhall

On Zoom: Zach Allen, Christina Hahn, Pat Long, Joe MacGregor,
Steve Willette

Minutes from December 16, 2021 approved with the addition of Zach Allen to being absent from the meeting. Motion: Jon Manley, Second: Tom James
Unanimous

Orders - Orders were taken for Conservation sweatshirts.

Mail - none

Reports

- **River Committee** - No Meeting
- **Annual Report** - As Danny Veverka was mentioned in the Annual Report, Joe MacGregor said that he recently saw Danny and that he has now received his Eagle Scout standing.
Motion to accept the Annual Report: Tom James, Second: Jon Manley
Unanimous.

Old Business

- **Warrants for Timber and Gravel and Land Use Change**

To see if the town will vote to authorize 75% of the Timber and Gravel Taxes collected pursuant to RSA 79-A:25 to be deposited into the existing Conservation Fund in accordance with RSA 36-A:5, III, as authorized by RSA 79-A:25, II. If adopted, this article shall take effect April 1st, 2022 and shall remain

in effect until altered or rescinded by a future vote of the town meeting. (Majority vote required)

To see if the town will vote to authorize (75%) of the Land Use Change Tax collected pursuant to RSA 79-A:25 to be deposited into the existing Conservation Fund in accordance with RSA 36-A:5, III, as authorized by RSA 79- A:25, II. If adopted, this article shall take effect April 1, 2022 , and shall remain in effect until altered or rescinded by a future vote of the town meeting. (Majority vote required)

Unanimously approved to be submitted.

- **Master Plan Updates**

Rail Trail and Trestle - Jon Manley reported that he has been in touch with Richard Verney of the Monadnock Mill, Peter Leishman of Milford and Bennington Railroad and Loufrom NHDOT and the Bennington Board of Selectmen.

It was mentioned that the gate to the trestle is now open. According to Jon, Mr. Verney said the Mill has no interest in replacing or repairing the trestle. Jon questioned Mr Leishman the cost estimate he had passed him several weeks ago. Mr. Leishman clarified the numbers which were for board feet rather than full boards. Jon asked both Mr. Leishman and DOT to write why neither wanted to rebuild the trestle. The Board of Selectmen encouraged Jon to continue any negotiations to further the rail trail and trestle upgrade. A discussion followed about whether the trestle and tracks should be abandoned if the Mill has no future use for them. Would tearing it down be an option? The trestle is a “red listed bridge.” What would the Snowmobile Club’s interest be? If the bridge and tracks are abandoned, who becomes the owner, the town? The state owns the Right of Way, however there are several situations along the rail line where private property owners own parts of the Right of Way.

Jon Manley will keep the Commission updated on any further developments.

New Business

- **Monarch Butterfly Waystation**

<http://butterfly-lady.com/how-to-create-a-monarch-waystation/>

The Commission members unanimously would like to follow up on this idea. More investigation is needed, and a discussion was held on the

commission promoting the idea for town residents to do on their own land as well as use town land to sow milkweed seeds or plant seedlings. Pat Long and Mike Munhall will do more digging on information through UNH Extension and NHACC.

- **Forest Box** - Joe and Leslie MacGregor would like to install a “Little Library” in the Bruce Edes Forest to house books and a journal for reflections by visitors to the Forest. Joe made the Little Library and Leslie will keep it stocked with appropriate books. It will be located near the upper dam. They will register it with the littlefreelibrary.org website. Motion by Jon Manley, Second by Pat Long, unanimous approval

- **Observations around town:**
 - Manley’s had a large bobcat in their yard this morning and a coyote this afternoon
 - Pat Long has otters in her backyard
 - Joe MacGregor saw an eagle come down Main St, hang a left onto Cross Street the other day.

- **Dumping Ground** - Concern was raised by members that the newly purchased property across North Bennington Road from the Transfer Station is becoming a dumping ground for used cars rather than its intended purpose of being a repair garage for heavy equipment. Mike will look into it.

- **Meetings** - Consensus is that a hybrid of Zoom and in-person meetings work for the Commission for time being.

Adjournment: Joe MacGregor moved to adjourn, second by Tom James.
Unanimous 7:30 PM

Recorded by Mike Munhall

Bennington Conservation Commission 2021 Annual Report

Your Conservation Commission has had a busy and productive year. With two new members: Pat Long and alternate, Christina Hahn Lightfoot we are now once again at a full

complement of members. Both these commissioners have already brought good ideas and new energy to the commission.

Engaging more with the young people in town has been one of the goals of the Commission. For the fifth year we provided the opportunity for two youngsters to attend a week of camp at the Harris Center for Conservation Education in Hancock learning to explore and appreciate the natural world around them. Several of our members guided the Bennington 4-H kids in finding and learning about invasive plant species in the Bruce Edes Forest. The Dodge Library upgraded its stanchans that display the Story Walk through the Forest. The Bennington Girl Scout Daisy Troop took the initiative to plant a beautiful flower garden around the Bruce Edes rock at the Depot. Pierce School teachers and students continue to use the Forest as a learning tool. And two Pierce School students also designed a roadside sign encouraging *recycling*. As the entrance to the Bruce Edes Forest, the condition of the Bennington Depot has been of interest to the Commission and its upgrade has been our primary goal for several years. This summer we took some steps to improve it. Commission members volunteered a week of work to paint the interior of the depot. After many years of inattention the woodwork needed washing and priming prior to painting. The resulting brightness of the rooms makes the building look fresh and much more pleasant to use. New curtains were made by Robyn Manley. Shortly after our work, the Board of Selectmen voted to hire Norm Mercier to paint the exterior. Before cold weather came in, he was able to get the building scraped and primed awaiting the spring to do the finished coats. In addition to the work on the depot, the new kiosk was completed by Eagle Scout, Danny Veverka formerly of Hancock. A sturdy structure, it informs visitors of the features and resources in the Forest. One of the features is the identification of plant life in the woods. Danny created lasting markers whose numbers correspond with those in the Forest brochure so visitors know what they are looking at. We are immensely grateful to Danny for his diligent work in making the Forest an even better feature of the town. The Commission spent a day clearing paths in the Forest once the autumn leaves had fallen.

We also worked with the town's Master Plan to coordinate items that reference the Conservation Commission. Two of the items addressed this year were: the development of a rail trail through town and the regular testing of bodies of water in town for their quality. This fall the commission began again one of its assignments from the selectmen to walk the town boundary checking markers; this year we did the Deering townline.

We were grateful this year to be able to reinstitute two of our traditions. The Roadside Cleanup in May drew a good number of townsfolk and left the roads much cleaner. And the last weekend in June saw the Annual River Paddle hit the Contocook with a record turnout. Along with many town residents, it drew paddlers from Nashua, Temple, Antrim, and Peterborough. We are pleased to be continuing our work for the town.

Michael Munhall, Chair