

**Somersworth Conservation Commission**  
**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING**  
**August 11, 2021**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Jeremy Degler  
Sarah Eckstein  
Mercedes O'Donohue  
Scott Orzechowski  
Jeremy Rhodes

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Angela Ficco  
Dale Smith-Kenyon

**STAFF PRESENT:** Michelle Mears

The meeting was called to order by S Orzechowski at 6:01 pm.

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes.

Regular Meeting of 7/14

Motion to approve as submitted by J. Degler, seconded by M. O'Donohue  
Approved 5-0-0

2. Public Comment

Comment re: Equestrian property noted received from SELT; no discussion of content, response will be forthcoming.

3. New Business

- A. Peter Houde of the Somersworth Lions Club, is seeking a conditional use permit to construct a 10' x 16' platform on a property located at 125 W. High Street, in the Recreational (REC) District, Assessor's Map 25 Lot 01, CUP#05-2021

Peter Houde presents; intent is to place the platform with an ADA compliant ramp to allow fishing at the site for wheelchair users; the platform will be directly on the waters' edge. No pilings will be placed as part of this work; footings will consist of concrete block. Wood will be PT, but not in water contact. No expectation of leaching of PT chemicals as a result.

J. Degler moves to approve as requested; J. Rhodes seconds. Approved 5-0-0

- B. B. MTM Holdings LLC, is seeking a conditional use permit for construction of the truck maneuvering area and stormwater treatment 16,050 SF impact to the Woodland Buffer on a property located on Gator Rock Road, in the Industrial (I) District, Assessor's Map 47 Lots 1B, 1C, 1D, 1E,1F & 1G, CUP#06-

Bob Stowell presents for the applicant. Intent is to merge 6 small industrial-zoned lots into a single lot and construct a distribution center for the applicants' business. This will consolidate/augment a set of smaller centers currently in use. Primary business consists of importation and distribution of soft goods (pillows, fabric, and

similar textile products). The building is planned to be approximately 160,000 sqft, high-stack warehouse space with a small mezzanine and office area, with approximately 90 employee parking spots and 10 active loading docks plus two trash/dumpster spaces at the dock. Current drainage is sheet flow running along gator rock road away from Rt 108 towards the proposed construction. The plan will channel this runoff and collected rainwater from the roof into 2 separate retention and infiltration basins to the North and West of the proposed structure, with the northerly basin collecting roof runoff as well as some surface and the westerly the remaining surface, with outflow to a secondary groundwater protection area; substantial treatment area is included in the basins as a result of this discharge plan.

Snow disposal is planned for deposit in a forebay of the northerly basin, the furthest one from wetlands on site.

Wetland impact is limited to buffer zones on the western section of the property to construct a truck turnaround.

J. Degler moves to recommend approval, I second. S Orzechowskit requests a a site walk to examine the site, motion and second modified to include. Vote is for approval pending mitigation of any concerns raised at the site walk.

Approved 5-0-0, site walk to be held August 24 2021, 18:00, at the site in question.

- C. 2021 Sustainability Committee Report  
No meeting held in July 2021. June 2021 meeting was concerned with community power coalition; solar ordinance to be discussed with the mayor and city manager.
- D. Getting map coordinates for easement monitoring  
S. Eckstein has compiled data for the known sites, as well as deed presence. Draft prioritization is in place based on known recency and acreage. Malley Farm deeds are being researched.
- E. Unauthorized tree cutting, trail signs and bridge construction at The Oaks 2 easement  
Code Enforcement letter has been sent, which constitutes the equivalent of a Cease and Desist. Next step is mitigation; M. Mears will check with DPW for removal.
- F. City invasives controls  
No updates
- G. Entomologist walks  
No updates
- H. Backyard habitat promotion  
S. Eckstein will add to city newsletter
- I. DES stewardship plan for 53 Coles Pond Road easement  
M. Mears has worked with the DES to establish the plan; it's compliant and approved. Monitoring will be required. Copies of the plan will be distributed to the

committee. Plan has been sent to the commission by city secretary. Includes compliance requirements. Annual monitoring and reporting is required.

- J. Detailed 53 Coles Pond Road baseline  
Baseline has been distributed; only notes are around invasives management and city access. Possibility of contracting a wildlife biologist to complete invasives work was raised; will be discussed at next meeting.
- K. Any other new business  
UNH is conducting a bioblitz; this will be added to the city newsletter.

**4. Old Business**

- A. Easement monitoring  
S. Eckstein is looking for a site walk partner.
- B. Wetland encroachment at former well parcel  
M. Mears will follow up.
- C. ATV trespassing  
S. Orzechowski will follow up.
- D. MEMBER ITEMS, SUB-COMMITTEE ITEMS, AND REPORTS
  - a. Low-flow showerheads  
S. Orzechowski will follow up.
- E. Update on remediation at Steven E. Brown Willand Drive property  
M. Mears will follow up regarding reseeding/planting.
- F. Any other old business that may come before the Commission  
The IPCC report was discussed; please see attached.

**5. Treasurer's Report**

City of Somersworth, NH		
Conservation Commission, Fund Balance		
July 31, 2021		
June 30, 2021	Balance Forward	\$ 98,251.42
	Receipts:	
	Interest Received	1.47
July 31, 2021	Ending Balance	\$ 98,252.89

D. Smith-Kenyon moves to adjourn, M. O'Donohue seconds. Approved Unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 6:42 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

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Jeremy Rhodes  
Conservation Commission Secretary

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Attachments: Chairman's Address:

The Conservation Commission's primary duty is to promote the proper utilization and protection of the natural resources and to protect the watershed resources of the City. We deal with agenda items and projects toward this end, and I think we do a good job with it, but it has been a while since we talked about the big picture. I would like to step back from regular business to do that. In short, the work that the Conservation Commission does is not enough. It scratches the surface of what needs to be done. The work that any organization does but scratches the surface of what needs to be done. We, and by "we" I mean humanity, are taking baby steps at a time when problems are so urgent and vast that we should be sprinting.

Let's look at what's happening around us. It can be roughly broken down into climate change and other environmental degradation.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has just reported that we would already be exceeding the 1.5 degrees Celsius global temperature increase the Paris climate accord aimed to avoid, but our air pollution is bad enough that it is reflecting heat back into space. We will exceed 1.5 degrees.

The impacts are profound and diverse. What happens when sea temperature changes? Well, just like the frozen dinner in your microwave, the peas cook faster than the potatoes. Some parts of the ocean warm faster than others, and this makes the problem more severe in some areas than others, but it also disrupts ocean currents, which drive weather patterns. Hurricanes are stronger. Rainfall is less predictable. The Gulf Stream is slowing and could collapse. This would devastate the northern hemisphere.

Oxygen saturation gets lower as water heats. Warm water means that fish can't respire. They die. Algae thrive when the water stops moving, and algae absorb more light and accelerate warming. They also consume oxygen and lower the saturation further. Of course, we get a lot of our food from the ocean.

Warmer oceans also release more carbon dioxide, creating a feedback loop that accelerates warming.

Aside from food instability, warmer oceans we cause us to experience extended droughts and more flood events. We will see more violent storms. As the ocean rises, it will inundate our coastal neighbors, causing large scale economic damage and salt water intrusion in aquifers and wells. Disaster relief will use what funding is available. Ultimately we will share part of that burden. In addition, the people who have lost their drinking water will need to go somewhere, and that will tax our systems.

Beyond the oceans, here are some more impacts. Species have a sweet spot range of temperatures where they can be viable (continue to survive and reproduce). Many species of animals will need to migrate northward or die. When that happens, they will need wildlife corridors to do so. For illustration, if you're a bear, you're not likely to walk through a city. You need supporting habitat along your route. We are challenged to link such wildlife habitats together to allow this.

Plants cannot easily move northward. We will need to foster diverse habitats in the hopes that some pockets will remain cool enough and diverse enough to allow imperiled plant species (including our trees) to survive. The success of species migrating northward and upward in elevation will be hampered by invasive species. Our hemlocks and ash are in trouble because of invasive pests, and native plants in general are beset by competition from invasive species. Many trees and plants in Somersworth have already succumbed to Asian knotweed and bittersweet, among others.

Fires – we are not immune. Our air quality declines from the smoke of western fires. When we start experiencing more prolonged droughts, we will see more wildfires of our own.

Consider a flood event. Culverts are overwhelmed, and roads and bridges wash out. Pollutants from what was dry land get into rivers and ponds. Of course we pull our drinking water from the river.

Conversely, a prolonged drought will cause draw-down in wells, which causes water from further away and deeper in the aquifer to get into a well, if it doesn't just dry up. That can result in contamination from arsenic and from pollutants.

Diversity is declining lower and lower in the food chain and in ecosystems. Insects species are disappearing faster than they used to. We need them for agriculture and to feed larger animals and to decompose our waste and aerate our soil and many other things. It's not just bees and butterflies.

We're poisoning ourselves with plastics and chemicals.

The list goes on. The important takeaway is that none of these problems occurs in a vacuum. They compound each other in ways that we could not foresee, and these things do impact us in Somersworth. There are things we can and must do at the local and individual level.

We also must get used to the fact that this is happening and prepare ourselves for the effects of damage that has already been done. Consider that it doesn't take much to unravel a community. You cannot have a community for any reasonable period of time without safe drinking water. Or roads and bridges. Or electricity. We live in a finely tuned machine with lots of gears. If one gear goes, the whole machine stops.

A utility pole goes down in a storm. The power company can't get there because the road is washed out.

We are dancing at the edge of a swiftly eroding precipice. We're inches from the edge -- not feet. In fact, we have already started to lose footing. The consequences of decades of blissful avoidance are upon us, and they will get worse, faster. I wish it were hyperbole, but we as a city, as a nation and a species will fail within our own generation unless everyone looks this problem in the face and does everything they can to fight it now.

Every decision we make needs to be made with this in mind, and we need to start putting it front and center.