

Town of Londonderry, Vermont
Conservation Commission

MINUTES

Thursday, March 31, 2022, 5 pm

Present: Helen Hamman, Irwin Kuperberg, Jane MacKugler, Steven Swinburne, Mark Wright, Sunny Wright

- 1) The February 2022 minutes were approved by unanimous vote after a motion by Helen and seconded by Sunny
- 2) Old Business
 - A) West River Trail signage – We are continuing to wait until warmer weather
 - B) One Londonderry Trail Project- Commission members reviewed a draft memorandum to the One Londonderry Trail Project as a response to their proposal for a bike trail system in the Shamburg Town Forest. Following a motion by Helen, seconded by Sunny and agreed to by unanimous vote the memorandum was approved and will be sent to One Londonderry and the Selectboard.
 - C) Forest Management Plans for Town properties. **We will ask Kevin Beattie to recommend a consultant forester to put together a new plan.**
 - D) Events
 - i. Pollinators—Patrick Kitchen of Bee the Change has offered to give the presentation and we will try it for May.
 - ii. Wetlands- Rebecca Chalmer from Vermont DEC has agreed to the talk, which we will schedule for May.
- 3) New Business
 - A) Pollinator project-In response to the statewide pollinator planting project being conducted by Bee the Change we reviewed various locations as potential sites. The following were considered the optimum locations: lower section of the Prouty land along the West River, old Shoe Barn site across from Williams Dam. We will present these to the Selectboard for review and approval before contacting Bee the Change.
 - B) Dam- We reviewed the DuBois & King engineering report and discussed its options. We formulated a position statement motion in support of dam removal which as approved by unanimous vote following a motion by Helen and seconded by Mark. Commission member Gary Hedman provided valuable expertise in our review and in formulating the position statement. It will be published on the town website and submitted to the Selectboard.
 - C) Proposed change to administrative assistant job description—The proposal for a consolidated administrative assistant was rejected by the Planning Commission. We recommend that the town proceed with the plan without including the Planning Commission.
 - D) Review of LCC roles and responsibilities- to be rescheduled
- 4) Wildlife Sightings
 - A) Bald eagle (adult and immature), mallard, wood ducks, merganser, pine siskind, mourning doves, tufted titmouse, black bear, robins, redwing blackbirds, bluebird.

The next meeting will be held on April 28.

Londonderry Conservation Commission

100 Old School Street
South Londonderry, VT

Irwin Kuperberg, Chair
Helen Hamman
Gary Hedman
Jane MacKugler
Stephen Swinburne
Mark Wright
Sunny Wright

TO: Londonderry Selectboard

Date: 3/31/2022

FROM: Irwin Kuperberg, Chair

RE: LCC Position on the Williams Dam

The Londonderry Conservation Commission has been monitoring the various issues associated with the Williams Dam, including the recent engineering report from DuBois & King.

We recognize that the dam (together with the associated Mill Pond and waterfall) has occupied a rich part of Londonderry's history, having offered recreation and visual beauty for many generations. Since its construction in the late 1800's it has been the eastern gateway to our North Village community. However, in recent years it has become obsolete and the impoundment behind the dam, filled with soft sediment, stands in stark contrast to the free-flowing sections of river upstream and downstream of the dam.

With regard to water quality, dams have a significant impact on water temperature profile. The sediment impounded upstream of the dam has resulted in a very shallow water column and increased stream width. In the spring and summer of 2022, the Conservation Commission intends to initiate a stream study to provide a baseline understanding of the impact that the dam has on the temperature profile of the West River. Its condition, classified by the State as "Significant Hazard", makes it mandatory that it be removed, rehabilitated or rebuilt.

Based on our assessment of the data in the DuBois & King report we voice our support for the removal of the Williams Dam. From an environmental stewardship and ecological perspective, removal of the dam is expected to result in significant benefits to the West River. From an environmental risk perspective, a properly permitted, designed, and constructed dam removal project will eliminate the potential catastrophic environmental impacts that might result from failure of the dam and uncontrolled release of sediment downstream. From a financial perspective, there is significant funding available to the Town to offset the costs of removal design, permitting, and construction. (Dam restoration or replacement projects are not eligible for these funds, and pursuing these alternatives would represent a significant financial burden to the Town and taxpayers.)

Benefits of dam removal include: lowered water levels during floods and other high-flow events; restoration of fish passage with improved habitat for fish and other wildlife, improved water quality through restored river temperature profile and natural sediment transport cycle; elimination of costs associated with periodic inspections, maintenance, and repairs; the creation of boating opportunities; and, elimination of liability associated with the dam.

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TO: One Londonderry Recreation Group, Londonderry Selectboard

Date: 3/31/2022

FROM: Irwin Kuperberg, Chair

RE: Proposed Trails at Shamburg Town Forest

The Londonderry Conservation Commission has reviewed the proposal for the creation of recreational trails in the Shamburg Town Forest. While we believe this project has great merit we would like to share the following concerns and recommendations:

CONCERNS

1. Use. The intended use of the trail needs careful examination. There are challenges associated with shared use by bikers and hikers. In addition, an adjoining landowner is said to be opposed to allowing biking.
2. Dogs. There needs to be an evaluation of whether dogs will be permitted due to their potential impact on the ecosystem.
3. Heron Rookery. There has been an active heron rookery in the large pond. When we last investigated the advisability of a trail we invited a representative from Fish and Wildlife to walk the property with us. We were told that the existing trail was too close to the rookery's sensitive habitat, making it inadvisable.
4. Trash and ongoing maintenance. The larger matter of ongoing long term trail maintenance, including trash removal, must be addressed.
5. Parking. The parking area at the site only has a capacity of six cars and could not handle things if the trail becomes popular. It could lead to the kind of intrusive parking situation that neighbors around Lowell Lake have experienced.
6. Logging Activity. The LCC's oversight of town properties includes a forestry plan that calls for periodic logging. This will come up again at Shamburg in the next decade and could cause considerable disruption and damage to any existing trails.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. All of the above items should be addressed if this project moves forward.
2. We invite members of the Recreation Group and Select Board to join us for a site visit to get a clearer picture of the situation on the ground. This should happen in the Spring when conditions are favorable.

We are grateful to One Londonderry for pursuing projects, such as this, that benefit the Town. We look forward to working with you.