

LCHIP BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING

Northwood Congregational Church

Doug Cole, Board Chair

September 8, 2014

Draft Minutes

Attendance

Voting Board Members Present: Doug Cole, Harold Janeway, Mandy Merrill, Bill Norton, Charlie Royce, Judith Spang; Julia Steed Mawson telephonically for discussion and vote on several items.

Non-Voting Board Members Present: Tracey Boisvert, Susan Francher, John Kanter, Pierce Rigrod, Beth Muzzey

LCHIP Staff: Paula Bellemore, Amy Dixon, Melissa Jones, Dijit Taylor

Guests: Sylvia Bates, Director of Standards and Research, Land Trust Alliance
John Hession and Karen Barnard from Hession and Pare
Jim O'Brien, Director of External Affairs for The Nature Conservancy (TNC) NH
Todd Selig, Durham Town Administrator

Introductions: Pierce Rigrod, new representative from DES and Paula Bellemore, new Natural Resource Specialist, attended their first BOD meeting.

Doug explained that LCHIP gave the Northwood Church money in 2009 for a study and that they are applying for a grant this year.

Land Trust Alliance Standards and Practices:

Sylvia Bates explained that Standards & Practices were first created in 1989 by LTA to positively affect public confidence and build organizations that will last. There are 12 standards which are relevant to any organization that holds a preservation or conservation easement. Adoption means the standards have been reviewed and will be considered a guideline for best practices. LCHIP's adoption would make the program a role model and "touch stone" for the organizations who apply to LCHIP for grants, who are required to adopt these standards and practices. Sylvia expressed the importance of PERMANENT land protection, which requires reputable, solid land trusts. At least 35 land trusts operating within New Hampshire have adopted LTA Standards and Practices

Auditors Report:

This is Hession and Pare's third year conducting LCHIP audit, but new field work by Karen Barnard provided fresh eyes. John Hession presented a summary of intent, process, and required communications as LCHIP's auditor. He told the Board that LCHIP's accounting processes are appropriate and consistent. They did not incur any unforeseen problems, disagreements with management, or misstatements during their audit. They presented a summary of LCHIP's financial statements, which are healthy. They did not identify any weaknesses in internal control, but noted

three modest improvements that could be made in personnel policy and files and concerning concentration of credit risk. Harold requested that Dijit inform the board as soon as the minor issues mentioned in the Management Letter were addressed, rather than waiting until next year's audit presentation.

Return on Investment Study: Jim O'Brien explained that TNC, the Trust for Public Lands and Society for the Protection of NH Forests have recently completed a study about the return on investment of state of New Hampshire dollars in land conservation. Board members received copies of the study over the summer. Counting state investments through LCIP, ARM, DES programs and LCHIP, from 1988 to 2012, every \$1 of state money produced \$11 in natural goods and services. This ties New Hampshire with Maine for the highest return on investment of the states TPL has studied.

This information is being used to help the legislative committee charged with studying "the current status of land conservation in New Hampshire and the state's role in encouraging the voluntary protection of land in the future."

Two years ago, a poll commissioned by the same groups found that the public didn't recognize LCHIP by name, but once informed, supported the program. LCHIP's recent efforts to increase public profile through more frequent e-newsletters, Facebook presence and videos are good steps toward making the program better known.

Sprucewood Forest: Sprucewood Forest was purchased by the town of Durham in part with funds provided by LCHIP. Although LCHIP language accepted by the town in the deed requires that hunting be allowed on LCHIP assisted properties, the town has an ordinance prohibiting hunting on town owned lands. The town seeks an exception to LCHIP's usual policy. Todd Selig pointed out that the property abuts the College Woods, an area used by college students who may not be aware of hunting seasons. Durham does not have a big population of hunting advocates and has a number of groups that wish to be able to uphold their ordinance against hunting.

Charlie pointed out that in the original LCHIP legislation discussion there was bipartisan support for allowing hunting on all land conserved with LCHIP funds. Judith emphatically emphasized that the public access onto LCHIP property should be APPROPRIATE.

Todd said he is merely here to ask for permission and that the town will accept any LCHIP decision. This is NOT a "hot button" issue for them; it is more the case that they might as well ask.

Nominating Committee Update: Charlie has spoken to eight possible candidates from the Monadnock area, but all were reluctant because of the time and travel commitment. Dijit and Doug passed around a list of potential candidates for the board to express opinions about.

Finance Report: Reflecting both an audit comment and earlier discussion in the Finance Committee, Harold mentioned a concern about the amount of cash being retained. Dijit explained that the reserve

account has been built up in case of hard times to come, but she agrees that spending down some of the reserve fund is appropriate at this time. This could be used instead of grant money to cover some of the administrative expenses for FY 2015.

Treasury and Fidelity are reviewing LCHIP's draft Investment Policy.

Staff Search: Thirty applications for the Historic Resource position which Amy is vacating have come in so far. Mandy has agreed to assist with the search process of the third time. Thank you Mandy! We hope to schedule interviews in October.

Grant Round Preview: There are 53 applications in this grant round. The Natural Resource Panel has met, and Historic Resource Panel is meeting soon. Projects will be ranked into 5 categories to assist the Board in their decision-making on November 17th. Dijit asked the Board to let the LCHIP staff know what they'd like to receive for application materials to prepare for this meeting. Bill requests a locus map for each project.

Term Stewardship: The Office of the Attorney General has informally let LCHIP know that LCHIP has the legal authority to remove LCHIP signs from properties whose stewardship agreement has expired and where the condition of the property no longer meets LCHIP standards. Bill Norton offers to draft a policy.

Dover Road Improvement Project: The City of Dover is planning a bridge improvement project that will have an impact on city owned conservation land on which LCHIP holds an executory interest. Staff is exploring how to address the situation.

With Julia Steed Mawson joining by phone to make a quorum:

Rumney Update: The town library is requesting approval to use the remainder of the mitigation money (about \$40,000) to help the town pay for construction costs for the accessible entrance to the library. This is a special case because the fund came as mitigation for a nearby wind tower development, not from the usual state sources. Nothing has come of repeated attempts to find other parties in Rumney interested in other mitigation projects using this money. Judith wants to make sure we note why we are not following LCHIP precedent and are paying for new construction.

MOTION: Charlie Royce

SECOND: Harold Janeway

To allow the remaining money in the Rumney mitigation fund, which is not state money and thus not subject to the usual LCHIP requirements, to be used as the town requests toward the construction of a universally accessible entrance to the Byron G. Merrill Library

VOTE:

Approved unanimously

Johnson Farm and Islands Project: The Ammonoosuc Conservation Trust is requesting an extension for completing the project from the scheduled March 2015 to December 2015. The project has received funding from the federal Farm and Ranchland Protection Program, through which due diligence typically takes 12 – 24 months.

MOTION: Bill Norton SECOND: Charlie Royce

To approve an extension of the completion of the Johnson Farm and Islands project until December 2015.

VOTE: Approved unanimously

Financial Report:

MOTION to accept the September Financial Report: Charlie Royce

SECOND: Bill Norton

VOTE: Approved unanimously

The next meeting is the all day grant selection meeting on November 17th.

The meeting adjourned at 5 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa Jones
LCHIP Office Manager

Doug Cole
LCHIP Board Chair