

New Hampshire Land and Community Heritage Investment Program
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
 Mathey Center at Burley Farms 247 North River Road, Epping, NH
Monday, March 27, 2023 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

- Voting Members: Sen. Debra Altschiller, Rich Cook, Bridget Freudenberger, Dick Lewis, Amanda Merrill, Rep. Andy Renzullo, Susan Slack, Ben Wilcox
- Non-voting Members: Shawn Jasper, Ben Wilson, Pierce Rigrod-Laskey
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- Staff: Paula Bellemore, George Born, Ben Engel, Katie Midolo
- Attending Remotely: Colin Cabot (V)
- Absent: Sen. Kevin Avard (V), Chick Colony (V), Rep. Karen Ebel (V), Taylor Caswell (NV), Mark Faulkenberry (NV), Jim Oehler (NV)

OPENING Chair Ben Wilcox opening the meeting at 2:05 pm, noting that 8 voting members were present in person, constituting a quorum, and an additional voting member was participating remotely. Wilcox then welcomed newly-appointed member, Senator Debra Altschiller and announcing that Senator Kevin Avard and Representative Karen Ebel have also been appointed to the Board but were unable to attend the meeting given the late date of their respective appointments.

MINUTES Wilcox called for discussion of the minutes of January 17, 2023 as distributed. There was none.

MOTION	To accept the minutes from the January 17, 2023, Board Meeting as presented.	Amanda Merrill
SECOND		Rich Cook
VOTE	9 voting members voted in favor, none opposed. The motion carried.	

FINANCIAL REPORT - Paula Bellemore reviewed the financial reports for month ending February 28, 2023 noting that the forecasted amount for line 6300 includes a significant increase for replacement of the LCHIP server, an increase in line 4209 reflecting past due interest from FY18 that has now been collected, and a possible error on the balance sheet, line 2300, which she will research. Bellemore called the Board’s attention to the Financial Dashboard, which will be added to future financial reports. The dashboard provides the board with forecasts for the administrative reserve fund funding levels for the next grant round. Wilcox called for discussion of the Financial Report as distributed. There was none.

MOTION	To accept the financial report for month ending February 28, 2023 as presented.	Bridget Freudenberger
SECOND		Susan Slack
VOTE	9 voting members voted in favor, none opposed. The motion carried.	

NOMINATING COMMITTEE - Dick Lewis announced that Chick Colony, who represents municipal interests, will be stepping down from the board in 2023. Lewis distributed a list of potential candidates for consideration, inviting board members to contact either himself or Paula Bellemore with any feedback or to volunteer to assist in the nomination process.

MODIFICATIONS TO BYLAWS - Dick Lewis reviewed a proposal to amend the bylaws to require the annual meeting be held in June, rather than January, effective CY 2024. This change is intended to better accommodate the biennial legislative

appointment process and to minimize the possibility of weather disruptions. Changes to the bylaws require an affirmative vote of none voting members of the Board.

MOTION	To amend the bylaws as proposed on the materials provided.	Amanda Merrill
SECOND		Susan Slack
VOTE	9 voting members voted in favor, none opposed. The motion carried.	

MODIFICATIONS TO CRITERIA, GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES – Ben Engel presented a staff proposal to amend the current method for calculating stewardship grant awards. Rich Cook expressed concern that while the proposed “flat rate” approach would provide a larger payment to stewards of historic buildings and structures, the payments would be reduced for stewards of conservation property. Cook stated that he would like to see a more equitable distribution method and volunteered to assist staff in revisiting the proposal. Bellemore stated that since no funds would be distributed until January 2024, there was time to work on the proposal, and supported that idea, thanking Cook for volunteering. No further action was taken.

REVISIONS TO PERSONNEL POLICY – Dick Lewis reviewed a proposal to revise LCHIP’s paid time off policy. Materials provided to members in advance describe three changes:

- 1) Simplify the paid-time-off benefit for employees, with no change in total available PTO.
- 2) Increase the cap on compensable time off available to employees at separation from 37.5 hours to 75 hours.
- 3) Combine “sick leave” and “sick bank” into one category – medical leave, and revise the policy for accessing that leave

Wilcox called for discussion. Bellemore stated that there was minor mistake on page two. Under the heading Personal Time, bullet C should be read “Beginning on the FIRST anniversary of employment...” rather than on the SECOND anniversary of employment. Following a brief discussion Wilcox called for a motion.

MOTION	Move to amend the personal policy as presented with the revision discussed and to authorize the Board Chair and Vice Chair to approve final language to be included in the Employee Manual.	Susan Slack
SECOND		Bridget Freudenberger
VOTE	9 voting members voted in favor, none opposed. The motion carried.	

LEGISLATIVE SESSION UPDATES -

SB 164 - Bellemore reviewed SB 164 which has been amended and will be taken up by the House in April. As amended, the bill proposes three changes to LCHIP’s enabling statute, RSA 227-M.

- 1) Adding a definition of biodiversity
- 2) Adding “biodiversity” as a type of easement in the definition of Easement Interests
- 3) Adding “biodiverse areas” in the definition of Eligible Resources

Bellemore suggested the Board consider seeking a sponsor to further amend the bill, removing the definition of biodiversity, and revising the changes to the definitions for easement interests and eligible resources. Bellemore continued that, if SB 164 was making changes to 227-M there may be an opportunity to make other changes to the statute. Possible changes include:

- 1) Removal of the executory interest requirement in 227-M:3, replacing it with a right of enforcement conveyed to LCHIP;
- 2) Revise 227-M:2 IV - the definition of “easement interests” to include contractual agreements, and

- 3) Revise 227-M:12 to allow CCE funds be used for expenses incurred by LCHIP in enforcing restrictions on LCHIP-funded properties. Wilcox opened the floor and the board discussed the definition and its implications on the program. The general consensus was that land possessing characteristics that support preservation of biodiversity are eligible under the existing statute, and that LCHIP review panel and board members consider impact on biodiversity in making funding decisions, however there was not unanimity regarding the program's response to SB 164.

Following the discussion Bellemore requested an ad hoc committee of the board be authorized to assist her in preparing a response to the bill, informed by the Board's discussion. Wilcox called for volunteers for such a committee. Rich Cook, Shawn Jasper, Amanda Merrill, and Susan Slack volunteered to work with Bellemore to further consider the bill and LCHIP's response. Bellemore will distribute any proposed testimony to the board before submitting it.

HB 221 – Commissioner Jasper shared that the Agricultural Land Preservation Program updates are moving along well. The program has \$1.2 million now, and is expected to have roughly \$1.75 million available at the end of the next biennium. Expects the grant round to be held as early as the end of 2024. These funds would reduce pressure on LCHIP funding by providing another funding source for farm protection.

State Historic Tax Credit - Director of the Division of Historical Resources Ben Wilson shared that the Governor's 24-25 budget includes \$5m in funding for a State Historic Tax Credit program which would be tremendously beneficial to efforts to address the state's housing shortfalls. This credit could be used in partnership with federal tax credits which would amplify the impact.

BACKGROUND MATERIALS

FY23 Q3 Program Dashboard – Katie Midolo reviewed the Q3 dashboard.

Open Grants Report – Bellemore responded to a question regarding the number of grants that have been open for more than two years, explaining that staff is in tune with this, and holds biweekly meetings at which each open grant is reviewed, with action steps and outgoing communication intensifying as grants age. Staff will begin adding a brief status report of any grant that has received a board extension, beginning with the June 2023 Dashboard.

Staffing Update – Bellemore shared that the position posting for the historic specialist position has resulted in 13 submissions which are being reviewed, with interviews starting next week.

Social Media Report - Bellemore commented that our new Instagram presence is building as hoped, and requested board members to like and share posts to help us reach a larger audience.

Correspondence – Bellemore asked members to be sure to read the correspondence reports, which include feedback from applicants, recipients, and partners.

ADJOURN - There being no other business before the Board, Wilcox reminded the Board that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday, June 13th at 2pm, location to be announced, and adjourned the meeting at 3:30pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Paula S. Bellemore
Executive Director

Ben Wilcox
LCHIP Board Chair

Approved June 13, 2023