

Minutes of the NH Land and Community Heritage Investment Program

Board of Directors Meeting

Monday, June 2, 2025, 2:00 pm – 3:30 pm

Dept. of Agriculture, Markets and Food, 1 Granite Place, Concord

Attending- Voting Members: Sen. Debra Altschiller (2:15), Rich Cook, Jeanie Forrester, Bridget Freudenberger, Erin Hammerstedt, Rep. Bob Harb, Dick Lewis, Rodney Rowland, Susan Slack, Ben Wilcox. Non-voting Members: Shawn Jasper (DAMF), Jim Oehler (NHFG); Pierce Rigrod, (NH DES), Hilary Ryan (BEA), Keri Yankus (DFL)

Guests – Greg Pollack, Stoddard Congregational Church

Staff: Paula Bellemore, Katie Midolo

Absent: Rep. Karen Ebel (V), Sen. Howard Pearl (V), Ben Wilson (DHR)

At 2:05 pm Chair Dick Lewis opened the meeting, noting that a quorum was present in person. Lewis asked if there were any objections to the meeting being recorded for the purpose of preparing the minutes. There were no objections.

MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 3, 2025

Lewis called for a motion to accept the minutes of the two meetings held on February 3, 2025. Following the motion and second, Susan Slack requested the minutes be revised to reflect that her motion to amend the minutes of the Nov. 2024 meeting include “and to approve”. Jeanie Forrester accepted the change as a friendly amendment, and Lewis called the vote.

MOTION – Jeanie Forrester	To revise the minutes of the February 3, 2025, meeting to add “and to approve the minutes as revised” to the motion regarding the Wakefield Brookfield Historical Society’s request so that the motion accurately reflects that the Board approve the minutes as revised.
SECOND – Rich Cook	
Motion carried by voice vote.	

REQUEST FROM STODDARD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH TO REDUCE REQUIRED STEWARDSHIP TERM

Lewis then announced a change to the agenda, stating that barring objections from the Board, the request from the Stoddard Congregational Church (SCC) to waive Section 6. C. of the Criteria, Guidelines, and Procedures will be moved to the top of the agenda to allow the project proponent to present the request.

Executive Director Paula Bellemore gave a brief overview and then welcomed Greg Pollack, recently elected chair of the SCC Board of Trustees, who spoke to the request to reduce the required 15-year stewardship term associated with their \$200,000 LCHIP grant.

Pollack argued that the project was significantly scaled back post-award to include only a new foundation. He felt the 15-year term was disproportionate given the lack of property value added as a result of the funded work, stating that an 8-year term would be more appropriate. Bellemore explained that stewardship terms are tied to the grant amount, not the scope of work or how funds are spent (materials vs. labor) and are meant to protect the public’s investment by ensuring the resource’s historic integrity is maintained.

Several Board members emphasized that the term reflects the value of the grant, not the nature of the work, and expressed reluctance to waive the established requirement. Pollack expressed concerns about other provisions in the agreement, stating that the term would be more acceptable if the obligations were reduced over time. As written, Pollack stated that the agreement favors LCHIP and offer little protection for SCC, questioning the risk exposure and legal cost responsibilities in the case of a dispute. Bellemore agreed to review the legal fees issue with counsel and expressed willingness to work with SCC on a process for collaborative resolution of potential violations. Several Board members voiced support for maintaining the 15-year term, citing the need to safeguard the public investment and noting that no similar term reductions had been approved in the past. After discussion, Lewis called for a motion.

MOTION –Erin Hammerstedt	To deny the request to waive CGP Section 6 and to uphold the required 15-year stewardship term for the Stoddard Congregational Church’s 2022 grant.
SECOND – Rodney Rowland	
Motion carried by unanimous voice vote	

Bellemore thanked Pollack for attending the meeting and stated that she would contact Pollack to continue work on the open questions raised by SCC specifically the recovery of costs and resolution of disagreements clauses.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Lewis called for a motion to elect Board Officers.

MOTION –Jeanie Forrester	To elect Dick Lewis Chair for a one-year term expiring 2026, Ben Wilcox Vice-chair for a two-year term expiring 2027, and Bridget Freudenberger Treasurer for a two year term expiring 2027.
SECOND – Rich Cook	
Motion carried by unanimous voice vote	

Lewis then requested volunteers for LCHIP committees for FY26. The following committee members were assigned. Bellemore reminded members that participation in a Review Panel within the first four years on the Board is strongly encouraged.

- Historic Resource Review Panel Rowland, Slack
- Historic Resources Advisory Committee Hammerstedt, Rowland, Wilson, Slack, Lewis
- Natural Resource Review Panel Cook, Freudenberger, Oehler, Rigrod, Yankus
- Natural Resource Advisory Committee Cook, Rigrod, Oehler, Yankus
- Nominating Committee Lewis, Wilcox, Freudenberger, Hammerstedt
- Finance Committee: Lewis, Wilcox, Freudenberger, Slack, Forrester
- 25th Anniversary Planning Committee – Cook, Wilcox, Forrester, Lewis, Freudenberger

NEW LOGO APPROVAL

Grant Programs Manager Katie Midolo described the process used to develop the proposed logo redesign. Hilary Ryan complimented Katie on her excellent management of the process, stating that her participation was both enjoyable and informative.

MOTION – Ben Wilcox	To approve the 2025 logo redesign as proposed.
SECOND – Jeanie Forrester	
Motion carried by unanimous voice vote	

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Freudenberger presented the March 31, 2024, financial reports, reviewing the income statement and balance sheet. Trends continue showing increased interest revenue and lower than budgeted expenses, primarily due to open positions. Current income statement projects are to close FY25 \$47,000 ahead of plan at year end. Balance profit and loss report, equity is \$740,000. Bellemore pointed out that the amount “due to state” includes the \$300,000 awarded to the Currier Museum which has been returned. Freudenberger stated that current forecast is holding at about \$3mm in grant funds to be available in the 2025 round, and that the administrative reserve fund is roughly \$34,000 ahead of target. Lewis called for questions. There being none Lewis called for a motion.

MOTION –Rodney Rowland	To accept the March 31, 2024, financial report as presented.
SECOND – Susan Slack	
Motion carried by unanimous voice vote	

FY26 OPERATING BUDGET

Freudenberger presented the FY 2026 operating budget as recommended by the Finance Committee, calling the Board’s attention to interest income, which is budgeted to be lower in FY26 than in FY25 based on anticipated economic conditions; and the Trust Fund administrative fee which had not been budgeted in FY25 in order to bring the administrative reserve fund closer to target. Freudenberger noted that most expenses are relatively flat, noting that the personnel budget includes full staffing for the full year. Freudenberger commented that the proposed budget results in a \$34,000 shortfall in revenue, which will be drawn from the administrative reserve fund, bringing that fund level with target. Bellemore shared with the Board that Nicole DeCarolis has accepted and begun a position with the Southeast Land Trust of NH, and that she has begun the search for a replacement. Lewis called for discussion, and there being none, a motion.

MOTION –Rich Cook	To approve the FY26 Operating Budget as presented
SECOND – Erin Hammerstedt	
Motion carried by unanimous voice vote	

STEWARDSHIP GRANT BASE LEVELS, 2025

Bellemore requested the Board approve stewardship grant base levels for 2025, which staff recommends be held at the same level as in 2023 and 2024, noting that these amounts had been reviewed by the Finance Committee, which recommends approval. Lewis called for discussion, there being none, Lewis called for a motion.

MOTION –Bridget Freudenberger	To approve the 2025 Stewardship Grant base levels as proposed.
SECOND – Sen. Debra Altschiller	
Motion carried by unanimous voice vote	

REQUEST TO EXTEND HISTORIC REHABILITATION GRANT TERMS

Bellemore reviewed a request from Mascoma Valley Preservation to add an additional 60 days to its current grant term. Bellemore explained that the organization has taken on two large projects, but that both are progressing, and that the work being done is of very high quality. Bellemore stated that staff recommend the extension be approved. Hammerstedt voiced support for the extension, noting that the organization has been working to professionalize. Slack asked if 60 days would be sufficient, and suggested 90. Bellemore reminded the Board that a waiver of the CGP requires the affirmative vote of nine members. Following a brief discussion Lewis called for a motion.

MOTION Susan Slack	To extend the grant term for the Kimball Property grant to 0 September 30, 2025.
SECOND Ben Wilcox	
Motion carried by unanimous voice vote	

2025 GRANT ROUND / PROGRAM UPDATES

Grant Programs Manager Katie Midolo provided a high level summary of the proposals invited to apply in the 2025 grant round, noting that requests are well above \$6mm, with only \$3-\$3.3mm expected to be available. Bellemore noted that the Board would be seeing an application from the Cheshire County Conservation District to provide a block grant in support of the NH Farm Futures Program.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REAPPOINTMENT

Lewis informed the Board that Bellemore's appointment as executive director will expire December 20, 2025, and asked for discussion, or if there was none, a motion to recommend reappointment.

MOTION Susan Slack	To recommend the Governor and Executive Council reappoint Paula Bellemore for a five-year term as executive director.
SECOND Ben Wilcox	
Motion carried by unanimous voice vote	

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 3:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Paula S. Bellemore, Executive Director

Dick Lewis, Board Chair

Approved: September 22, 2025