

DRAFT
North Hampton Conservation Commission
Meeting Minutes – December 12, 2023

Lauri John Etela

October 16, 1943 – October 21, 2023

***The Conservation Commission expressed its condolences to
Donna Etela and the Etela Family on the passing of Lauri Etela.***

Lauri was a valued member of the Commission and will be very much missed.

Tribute to Lauri Etela: The Etela Family will be hosting a celebration of life in honor of Lauri on December 22, 2023 at Centennial Hall from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Administrative: The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. via Channel 22 from the Town Hall. The agenda was posted in Compliance with RSA 91-A requirements.

Roll Call: Members present: Lisa Wilson, (Chair), Kathy Grant (Co-Chair), Dave Ciccalone, Audrey Prior, Phil Thayer and Andrew Vorkink. **Members of the Public:** Jay Chabot, Jennifer Kotzen, and Larry Knowlton.

Approval of October 10, 2023 Draft Minutes: After review of the October 12, 2023 minutes, ***a motion was made by Andrew Vorkink, duly seconded by Audrey Prior to accept the minutes as written.*** The motion carried.

New Business:

Nominations for Appointments to the Conservation Commission: Jay Chabot and Jennifer Kotzen, town residents, met with the Commission to express their interest in serving on the Commission. Mr. Chabot, who has recently retired from the Naval Shipyard, has an engineering degree and the background and expertise to help the Commission assess and improve the town's culverts and overall water quality. Ms. Kotzen, with a degree in geology, now has more time to devote to what matters in her life following a career transition and wants to help protect the environment. ***A motion was made by Lisa Wilson, duly seconded by Phil Thayer, to recommend to the Select Board the appointments of Jay Chabot as a regular member and Jennifer Kotzen to serve as an alternate member, each for three-year terms.*** The motion carried.

New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commission Dues (NHACC) & Legal Fees: ***A motion was made by Phil Thayer, duly seconded by Dave Ciccalone, to authorize a payment of \$375 for the annual dues for the NHACC and a payment of \$2,362.50 for an invoice from Michelle Peckham for legal work to help protect the Dalton Town Forest and for work pertaining to a potential land acquisition.*** The motion carried.

Old Business:

Conservation Easement Subcommittee Update: Mr. Larry Knowlton, 224 Atlantic Avenue, North Hampton, NH, met with the Commission to discuss the 40' wide access strip to the conserved portion of the Lafayette Crossing (Map 7-53) conservation parcel, owned by W/S Properties. The Commission discussed the potential use of the access strip for entry into the existing trails behind the Lafayette Crossing shopping center. Mr. Larry Knowlton, who recently bought the house and land adjacent to the strip and who has been fixing up that property, generously offered at his expense to make a number of improvements to the access strip if the Commission were to decide to use it as pedestrian entrance.

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After discussion, the Commission decided that for now the access strip is probably not the most appropriate or safest entrance to the trails. This is because where it runs across the lawn between the two adjacent houses, there is a 6' drop-off and wall, necessitating stairs, and the land behind contains a creek and dense underbrush. Mr. Knowlton, although willing to improve the entrance, stated he is agreeable to pedestrians to use the dirt driveway on the other side of his property, which is already informally used by neighbors, which does not contain a wall, drop-off, creek or brush to access the trail. The Commission concurred that the informal access is a good solution for now and would make it easier for everyone concerned, while clearly preserving the legal and conservation rights of W/S Properties and the Commission. Mr. Knowlton agreed to remove the existing steps from the wall and put a gate on the new fence, which partially is on the 40' wide strip so people don't inadvertently try to cross at that area. The Commission will contact W/S Properties to discuss its recommendations.

Lafayette Crossing Trail Improvements: The Commission discussed improvements to one of the existing trails behind the shopping center and that there has been a lot of work in recent months by the state to improve the Rail Trail which runs along the eastern boundary of the conserved land at Map 7-53. This has made some of the existing trail entrances off the Rail Trail too steep for easy access. The Commission would like to reroute one of the trails for better access but that rerouting crosses a short ravine, which is normally dry but in heavy rains carries runoff. The Commission will plan to contact town officials and W/S Properties to discuss any proposed improvements to the trail network and potential access to the Rail Trail.

Trail Maintenance Update: Phil Thayer suggested possible modifications and improvements to the Blue Trail at Dustin-Booker Farm. Kate Dardinski reported that she will need more lumber to complete an additional 200' of bog bridge work along the trails. ***A motion was made by Phil Thayer, duly seconded by Kathy Grant, to authorize an expenditure up to \$1,000.00 for additional planks and screws.*** The motion carried.

Conservation Signage: Kate Dardinski installed additional informational signage along the conservation parcels to include trail blazers, signs to remind hikers to wear blaze orange during hunting season, and signs posting areas where motor vehicles are prohibited on conservation land. Commissioners have also installed private property boundary signs to discourage trespassing. John Hubbard will plan to remove the aged Dustin-Booker Farm road sign and install the new sign along the Buckskin Lane entrance as soon as the Department of Public Works is able to schedule the work.

Other Business: America the Beautiful Grant: The Commission is pleased to announce that North Hampton is the recipient of funding from a **\$2 million America the Beautiful Grant** from the **National Fish and Wildlife Foundation**, which will support three high priority seacoast projects to include **Phase II and III plans to restore Philbrick Pond Saltmarsh**. The funds will also be used to restore tidal wetland systems in Hampton and at Odiorne Point. This project received strong support from North Hampton residents, town officials, and project partners from NH DES, The Nature Conservancy, Kevin Lucey, Habitat Coordinator for the Department of Environmental Services' Coastal program; Peter Steckler, Principal, Northeast Conservation Services; and Geoff Wilson, Bearcreek Wildlife Sanctuary.

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Correspondence:

November 14, 2023: Notification from Coakley Landfill Group pertaining to Map 21, Lot 37, located within the groundwater management zone for the Coakley Landfill. It has come to the attention of the Commission that this is a conserved parcel with standard conservation provisions; however, from aerial views, a commissioner noted that commercial activities from the abutting lot (Map 21, Lot 36) have spilled over into the conservation land. The Commission will plan to investigate the matter and take appropriate action.

November 16, 2023: Rockingham County Conservation District (RCCD) Conservation Easement Monitoring/Stewardship Report for the following parcels: Aerial monitoring for United Church of Christ parcel and ground monitoring for Jenkins easement where the Town of North Hampton holds an executory interest acting by and through the secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). No issues of concern were reported for the United Church of Christ parcel. The RCCD report noted a few areas of concern and has plans to work the Jenkin’s easement property owner to address issues documented in the report.

Non-Public Session: RSA 91-A:3, II(d) Consideration of the acquisition, sale or lease of real or personal property which, if discussed in public, would likely benefit a party or parties whose interests are adverse to those of the general community. Lisa Wilson called a Roll Call vote and the motion carried.

The public meeting adjourned to enter in non-public session at 8:35 p.m.

A Roll Call vote was taken by Lisa Wilson.

Non-Public Session Members present: Members present: Lisa Wilson, (Chair), Kathy Grant (Vice Chair), Dave Cicvcilone, Audrey Prior, Phil Thayer and Andrew Vorkink.

A motion was made by Andrew Vorkink, duly seconded by Phil Thayer, to leave the Non-Public Session at 9:26 p.m. Lisa Wilson called a Roll Call vote and the motion carried.

Public Session reconvened at 9:27 p.m. **A motion was made by Phil Thayer, duly seconded by Andrew Vorkink, to seal the minutes.**

Lisa Wilson called a Roll Call vote.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 9:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beverly Moore

Recording Secretary

“These minutes were prepared within five (5) business days as required by NH RSA 91-A:2, II. They will not be finalized until approved by the majority vote by the Commission.”