Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Conservation Commission Meeting
Whitcomb Hall, Main Street, Swanzey, NH
Meeting Minutes –May 5, 2025

Note: Minutes are subject to review, correction, and approval by the Commission. Review, correction, and approval of minutes generally occur at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Commission.

CALL TO ORDER
The meeting of the Swanzey Conservation Commission was called to order by Chair Cheri Domina at 4:01 p.m. Committee members present: Chair Domina, Jay Ward, Bob Goodrich, Nancy Karlson, Bonnie Hart, and alternates Wally Smith and Jane Johnson. Assistant Planner Stephon Mehu. Chair seated Wally Smith and Jane Johnson for Bud Winsor and Mark Scalera.

ABSENT
Bud Winsor and Mark Scalera

OTHERS PRESENT
Mike Gomarlo

MINUTES
- The commission members considered the meeting minutes for April 7, 2025. There was a **motion** by Smith to approve the Minutes as presented. There was a second to the motion by Ward and no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***

PUBLIC INPUT
Mike Gomarlo is concerned that road culverts on N. Winchester Street are dumping water into his hayfield, and that construction on the street planned this summer will not fix the problem. He has a similar problem in his sugar lot on Atkinson Hill. He cited several others around town he's spoken to with similar issues in their fields, such as Cynthia Brown. He felt that if we want to encourage agriculture in the town, we can't ruin people's hayfields by sending road runoff full of salt and other contaminants and unwanted seeds into them and creating wet areas that can't be mowed. He has not signed off on the construction plans. Can engineers find a better solution? One that the town can afford? Commission members agreed that the town should protect ag fields better and that if we don't have the funds to do a project right, it should be postponed and more funds raised. Johnson noted that some projects have already been pushed back years. Smith suggested Gomarlo go to a Selectmen's meeting with Joe DiRusso present to discuss the problem; one of us could attend in support if necessary. The Commission agreed that Domina would draft a memo and send to Mehu to pass along.

OLD BUSINESS
Wetland Conservation District amendments—Ward and Domina met with Paquette and Mehu earlier today, and Ward distributed copies of the proposed new amendments with updates agreed on at that meeting. Amendments had been drafted this spring by a work group of Ward, Domina, Hart and Victoria Ames from the Planning Board. Members went through the document line by line and offered comments and edits; Ward will incorporate into a new version. Hart noted that we need to do lots of online education about the amendments this summer.

We will offer to attend a joint meeting with the Planning Board on either May 22 or June 12, or both, if they'd like to tackle the amendments in two sections.

New Business
Review for Planning Board / ZBA / Town (S. Mehu)

DRAFT

Avanru Development Hangar, Airport Rd. (PB)—What will be stored in the hangar? Airplanes or construction equipment? We had no concerns with the site; Planning Board will look at purpose and drainage plan.

Environmental Alternatives, Safford Dr. (PB)—Members had several concerns: What will their waste be, and can our town process it, whether it's solid waste or something going to the sewage treatment plant. Will there be air or noise pollution? We saw no outdoor storage tanks on the plan. Will chemicals be used, stored and disposed of onsite? Scalera asked about the stream that flows nearby into Wilson Pond. Do the wetlands empty into it? Development is right up against wetlands. Discussed how our proposed amendments might affect such a plan in the future. Some wetland areas might be too small to be affected by the ordinance; others are larger and might require a buffer. Domina will draft a DHR form to run by the ConCom.

Wilson Pond Road home (ZBA)—Discussed the proposed enlargement of a home on a nonconforming lot, with a deck that would be closer to the lake. Variance needed for nonconformities. Given his own experience, Ward felt it might be very hard for them to get a permit from the state, making any town reviews moot. ConCom had concerns re: increase in impervious surface/runoff in the Shoreland Zone; the applicant offered no plans for stormwater management. The entirety of the property is also in a more restrictive part of the Shoreland Zone, within 125 ft. of the pond. Would this set a bad precedent? Domina will draft a DHR form to run by the ConCom.

ARLAC request—Received annual request from ARLAC for $125 to fund bacteria monitoring in the Ashuelot River.

- Ward made a motion to approve a donation of $150 to ARLAC. Goodrich seconded. No further discussion; all in favor. ***Motion passed.***

Swanzey Lake Host Program—Karlson requested the ConCom donate $1,500 to the Lake Host program for 2025, to match $1,500 from the town. This will fund checking boats for invasive species at the ramp. She noted that she needs more employees this year.

- Ward made a motion that ConCom pay half the cost of the Lake Host program this year, up to $1,500. Smith seconded. No further discussion; all in favor. ***Motion passed.***

Officer Elections—Domina said that Winsor was happy to have someone else step up to VC this year, but he did not request to step down (via email).

- Ward made a motion to re-elect Domina Chair and Winsor Vice-Chair again this year. Johnson seconded. No further discussion; all in favor. ***Motion passed.***

Annual Scholarship—Domina noted that we forgot to advertise our annual scholarship this winter, and no one at the school asked us about it. We've given it to the same college student for 3 years. Should we do something else with the funds this year? Someone suggested giving twice the money next year. We'll need to re-evaluate and perhaps change the criteria.

Summer Programs—Mehu suggested a community garden behind the Carpenter Home. Is Allyce from the childcare center interested? Hart said she is willing to lead group youth hikes this summer, and people offered ideas for forester or other pro to also attend.

OLD BUSINESS

Open Space Plan 2025 Contract – Domina said that Selectmen requested a change on the signature line, from "Town of Swanzey" to "Swanzey Conservation Commission," since we are using our own funds. She requested the members re-approve the contract with this change; the new contract has been signed by Jeff Littleton of Moosewood.

DRAFT

- Johnson made a motion to re-approve the Moosewood Ecological Contract for $16,000, with changes. Karlson seconded. No further discussion; all in favor. ***Motion passed.***

Forestry & trails at Mt. Cresson—Hart said she got only 4 replies to her Doodle poll for a field trip. Will resend and set a date.

Swanzey Lake Watershed Management plan update—Karlson said that the Swanzey Lake work group is meeting May 15 at 1 pm at Richardson Park for a walk-around to see updates and discuss next steps for implementation work.

OTHER BUSINESS

Winsor wanted to remind CC members of the **Monadnock Conservancy meeting** at Pilgrim Pines May 28, 5-7 pm.

Domina discussed the letter we received from NH Turtle Rescue, re: state-listed turtles and injury rehab. She noted that it is part of a **new turtle conservation initiative** in the region, which will also include a road crossing and mortality assessment, and promotion of NH Fish & Game's Reptile and Amphibian Reporting Program (RAARP). Harris Center is offering a Zoom program May 13 on Turtle Transport Volunteer Training.

Old Home Day—Johnson asked whether we'd be having a booth again. Domina suggested we talk about the turtle initiative as part of wetland education.

Next Meeting: June 2, 2025

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Ward to adjourn, second by Jonson, without further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.*** Adjournment occurred at 6:47 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Cheri Domina, Chair

DRAFT