Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Conservation Commission Meeting
Whitcomb Hall, Main Street, Swanzey, NH
Meeting Minutes –August 4, 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 4:03 p.m. Committee members present: Chair Domina, Nancy Karlson, Bob Goodrich, Bonnie Hart, Bud Winsor and Mark Scalera, and alternate Jane Johnson. Chair seated Jane Johnson for Jay Ward.
Also present: Stephon Mehu, Assistant Town Planner; Richard Lane; Jim Jarzabek

ABSENT
Jay Ward, alternate Wally Smith

OTHERS PRESENT

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

PUBLIC INPUT
Jim Jarzabek of 17 Water's Edge on Wilson Pond said that his neighbor at 21 Water's Edge has built a shed without a permit on their non-conforming lot, and it doesn't meet setbacks. Blocks view from his driveway. Concern that town staff went to the wrong address to issue the permit initially, and the landowner never got one. We were unaware of the project, as it never came to a town board. It is within the 125-foot shoreland zone setback, but there isn't anything the ConCom can do about it at this point. May need a state permit.

Domina mentioned that Gary Coburn came to see her today about a bear hunting permit on town land behind his house. Said NH Fish & Game advised him that someone from town had to sign the permit as the landowner. Stephon had seen him earlier and told him there were no issues. Domina said she signed the permit; Coburn had to postmark it today. No one recalled ever having to do that before for town properties.

NEW BUSINESS
Review for Planning Board / ZBA / Town

A. Asher Construction, 209-A Safford Drive—Site Plan Appl. Mehu said they came before the Planning Board last year, and got a variance in March, but had to come back with some changes. Discussion revolved around the proposed gravel parking lot and the drainage there. Why is it needed and what will be parked or stored there? Will runoff leach into the wetlands or water table from the catch basin? Members also recalled a former neighboring landowner (at current Clearwater Pool & Spa) filling in the wetlands behind the business, and rumors about former dumping of chemicals as well.

Facebook & Web Page—Domina said she met with our new Town Administrator, Lori Rautiola, to catch her up on our business. Rautiola didn't have a problem with ConCom having its own Facebook page. Discussed a page vs a group, and Domina said she'd set up a page and asked if Hart would also be an admin, and Hart suggested Ward as well. Domina said that she would also check our page on the town website for potential updates; Mehu said the town is upgrading its website.

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Closing Airport Road—Domina said she'd had a complaint from a resident (who also leads walks at the airport) about the City of Keene closing the airport road to walkers during Wastewater Plant business hours. Apparently there are safety issues. It's unfortunate, but not much we can do, as it's Keene's property—people will just need to go after 4 or on weekends.

OLD BUSINESS

Old Home Day, July 19—Domina thanked everyone for their help, and members agreed it was a good event for us to be at, and great turnout. Some good conversations. Thanks to Moosewood Ecological, Harris Center and NH Fish & Game for loaning supplies.

Wetland Conservation District amendments—Discussed the Planning Board meeting that Domina and Ward attended last week. The Planning Board voted abruptly 4-3 to eliminate the buffer section from the document, squelching discussion. Domina said she is trying to meet with Scott Self to discuss buffers vs. setbacks and what he might accept; he replied via email that he might be amenable to a 20-ft setback. Members agreed 20 feet was not acceptable, and felt that the public was willing to accept more protection. Why are we even working on a conditional use permit if we aren't adding additional wetland protection? Members agreed we would rather work with the Planning Board than to go to petition—we want it to be a collaborative process. Richard Lane asked about research we had uncovered on the effectiveness of buffers; Domina said she'd send everyone a report from Great Bay with an in-depth literature review and some tables (which she passed around). Mehu suggested a field trip to visit some wetland properties affected by development. Domina will ask Jeff Littleton for suggestions. Johnson suggested we discuss buffers vs. setbacks with SWRPC's Natural Resources Committee Aug. 27.

Mt. Cresson Trails—Jeremy Turner at Meadowsend said that their crew can reconstruct the original loop later this fall, using the "New Up Trail" they'd flagged to bypass a steep section, that our trail recon group approved. They will also relocate the beginning of the trail to drier ground, and fell some hemlocks near the summit to open up the view again "as best as possible." Turner said it would be a hand crew with chainsaw, rakes and leaf blower, but they could use some logs or steel posts to delineate the parking lot. Turner suggested the cost would not exceed $3,000.

Domina said she didn't want leaf blowers or steel posts used. Members discussed having our town crews bring some equipment in to smooth out and clean up the parking lot; will discuss with DPW. Also discussed connecting to the rail trail; we didn't find a route we liked. Hart said she would do some more recon. We would probably need permission from the rail trail commission to connect as well. We can rebuild that connection at a later date if we so choose.

Motion made by Scalera to approve up to $3,000 to rebuild the Mt. Cresson hiking trails. Goodrich seconded. No more discussion; all in favor. Approved.

Swanzey Lake & Wilson Pond news—Winsor said the Swanzey Lake group is doing a septic survey to gather information that will enable them to get a grant to help people upgrade lakeside septic systems. Scalera said a biologist is coming soon for August water testing on Wilson Pond.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, September 2

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Goodrich to adjourn, second by Winsor, without further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.*** Adjournment occurred at 6:20 pm.

Respectfully Submitted, Cheri Domina, Chair

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