

City of Laconia
Conservation Commission
Wednesday, February 4, 2026 - 5:00 PM
City Hall in the Armand A. Bolduc City Council Chamber
Draft Minutes

2/4/2026 - Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER

D. Anson calls the meeting to order at 5:02.

2. ROLL CALL

Chair Dean Anson, Deb Williams, Jen Kreitzer, Dan Hooberman, and Peter Nagle are present. Lisa Morin, Rod Cameron, and Bob Harrington are not in attendance.

3. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

4. RECORDING SECRETARY

Greyson Draper, Planner Technician

5. STAFF IN ATTENDANCE

Greyson Draper, Planner Technician

6. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

6.I. 1/21 Minutes

D. Williams identifies two typos to be corrected on the draft minutes. D. Williams motions to accept the minutes with the corrections. J. Kreitzer seconds the motion. Unanimous.

7. NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES APPLICATIONS

8. OLD BUSINESS

8.I. Road Salt Information

P. Nagle presents his progress on researching road salt information used by Public Works in the City of Laconia. He shares his ongoing research into road salt usage and best management practices. He notes that municipalities nationwide are facing increased salt costs and shortages, and that excessive salt use has significant impacts on vegetation and water quality. He discusses alternative de-icing practices, including brine application, calibration of plow equipment, and other technologies used to reduce salt usage. The use of beet juice additives was briefly discussed, with concerns raised regarding mess, staining, and potential liability. P. Nagle raises the importance of identifying no-salt or low-salt areas within the City, particularly near lakes, streams, bridges, and stormwater discharge points. It was noted that further coordination with the Department of Public Works would be helpful to understand current practices, training certifications, and designated areas.

9. NEW BUSINESS

9.I. Natural Resource Inventory Status By Sarah Sullivan, Project Manager At FB Environmental

Sarah Sullivan, Project Manager with FB Environmental, provides a detailed presentation on the Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) Analysis being prepared for the City of Laconia. S. Sullivan explains that the project is a supplemental analysis, not a rewrite or update of the existing 2009 or 2022 NRI documents.

S. Sullivan reviews the project purpose and goals. She explains that the primary goal of the NRI Analysis is to identify areas of high environmental and ecological value within the City that warrant protection from development. These areas are defined as locations where multiple natural resources overlap, creating a high-value concentration of ecological features.

She explains that the analysis is intended to serve as a decision-support tool for the Conservation Commission and the City, to be used during the review of development applications, conservation planning and prioritization, and strategic and long-range municipal planning.

S. Sullivan reviews the analytical methodology FB Environmental will be employing: Co-occurrence analysis, a GIS-based spatial analysis technique that overlays multiple natural resource datasets to identify areas where resources intersect. She explains that each natural resource data layer (e.g., wetlands, surface waters, groundwater protection zones, forest types) is assigned a numeric value indicating presence or absence. Then these layers are overlaid and combined to calculate a cumulative score for each area, representing resource density. Areas with higher scores indicate greater ecological and environmental importance.

She presents an example from a similar project completed for the Town of Lee, where the analysis highlighted high-value environmental areas such as river corridors. She notes that the Lee example focuses primarily on drinking water resources, while the Laconia project is expected to include a broader range of natural resource types.

Next, S. Sullivan reviews the data sources and resource layers being utilized for this NRI analysis. S. Sullivan states that the analysis will rely on existing, authoritative GIS datasets, including but not limited to: National Wetlands Inventory (NWI), National Hydrography Dataset (NHD), Shoreland and floodplain data, Groundwater and wellhead protection areas, Wildlife and habitat data, and Forest and soil classifications. She notes that some datasets, including the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan, have been updated since the 2022 NRI, and will provide more current information.

S. Sullivan advises that FB Environmental will compile a comprehensive list of proposed data layers, along with metadata such as data currency and source, for review by the Commission before analysis proceeds.

In the weighting of natural resources, she explains that the analysis could be conducted with equal weighting of all resource layers or with differential weighting to emphasize resources of particular importance to Laconia, such as drinking water supplies, wetlands, or critical habitats. She emphasizes that any weighting decisions would be made in consultation with the Commission, following review of the proposed data layers.

Next, S. Sullivan outlines the following project tasks and deliverables:

1. Review of existing NRI documents (2009 and 2022) to identify already documented high-value resources to inform the analysis.
2. Compilation and review of GIS data layers, including Commission feedback on inclusion and weighting.
3. Completion of the co-occurrence analysis and production of:
 - o A static map identifying high-priority environmental areas,
 - o GIS shapefiles for City use and integration into existing mapping systems.
4. Preparation of a summary report documenting:
 - o Analysis methodology,
 - o Any weighting applied,
 - o Identification and description of high-priority resource areas.
5. Meetings with the Commission, including a data review meeting and final presentation of results.

Ms. Sullivan clarifies that field investigations and resource delineations (such as vernal pool mapping or Prime Wetland designation) are not included in the current project scope, but could be considered as a future phase.

She proposes a condensed timeline of approximately six months, consisting of:

- January–February 2026: Review of existing NRI documents and compilation of data layers,
- Late February–Early March 2026: Commission review of data layers and weighting decisions,
- March 2026: GIS co-occurrence analysis,
- April–May 2026: Review and discussion of analysis results,
- June–July 2026: Final map, data delivery, and summary report.

She explains that flexibility is built into the schedule to accommodate Commission availability and further discussion if needed.

The Commission discusses using iNaturalist for public data collection. S. Sullivan discusses coordination with iNaturalist and public engagement. She agrees that the co-occurrence analysis could be used to guide volunteer and community science efforts, and that iNaturalist observations can be overlaid with analysis results to enhance understanding of high-priority areas, even if those observations are not incorporated directly into the initial analysis.

She concludes by outlining the following next steps:

- Completion of review of the 2022 NRI,
- Preparation of a proposed list of GIS data layers with metadata,
- Scheduling of a follow-up meeting to review data layers and weighting options.

She invites Commissioners to identify and share known priority areas and locally significant resources to help inform the analysis.

The Commission continues discussion following the presentation by Sarah Sullivan, FB Environmental, regarding the NRI Analysis project.

The Commission discusses the importance of supplementing GIS-based analysis with field-based data, particularly for wetlands and vernal pools that are best identified after snowmelt. The potential future designation of Prime Wetlands, including areas near Pickerel Pond, was discussed. It was noted that Prime Wetland designation requires certified wetland delineation, landowner permission, and State approval, and would likely be a longer-term effort beyond the scope of the current project.

The Commission discusses how the NRI Analysis would complement, rather than replace, the 2009 and 2022 NRIs, and acknowledge that some resources, such as scenic viewsheds and education elements, would need to be addressed separately.

9.I.i. Using iNaturalist To Build A Laconia Wildlife & Vegetation Inventory

The Commission discusses plans to engage the public in data collection using the iNaturalist mobile app. D. Anson explains that iNaturalist allows users to submit georeferenced photographs of plants, animals, fungi, and other organisms, which are then reviewed and verified by experts. D. Anson discusses plans for a public training event in April, potentially around Earth Day, in partnership with Prescott Farm. The proposed format would include a brief indoor training session followed by outdoor observation practice. Potential participants include members of the general public, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and students.

The Commission discusses additional outreach ideas. The outreach ideas include creating a City-wide iNaturalist project for Laconia, partnering with schools for educational assignments, holding friendly competitions to encourage participation, and conducting BioBlitz events at locations such as Prescott Farm and Lake Opechee.

The Commission agrees that iNaturalist data could be overlaid with the NRI Analysis results to help identify priority conservation areas.

9.II. Milfoil Grant From NHDES

G. Draper reports that the milfoil management contract is in place and that grant funding from NHDES is proceeding as planned. The program includes diver-assisted suction harvesting (DASH) and herbicide treatments for the 2026 season, which are applied on an alternating schedule. G. Draper shares that annual costs are approximately \$60,000, with the State typically reimbursing half of the cost with the grant monies. However, the City must initially pay the full amount and then receive reimbursement. Lake Opechee and Lake Paugus are treated annually, with herbicide applications occurring every other year. Lake Paugus is also the City's drinking water source, requiring additional care and monitoring. D. Williams and G. Draper confirm that the milfoil grant is scheduled for City Council approval and that additional information can be shared with Commissioners upon request.

9.III. Climate Cafe 2/12/26

D. Williams announces that the next Climate Café will take place on Thursday, February 12, 2026, at 5:30 PM, at The Commune-A-TEA space on Main Street. The topic will focus on forest management techniques used at Prescott Farm to improve habitat diversity. Future Climate Café topics may include iNaturalist training and community education.

9.IV. Lake Opechee Watershed Management Plan Grant Application

The Commission discusses whether to pursue a Watershed Management Plan for Lake Opechee, noting that plans have already been completed for Lakes Winnisquam, Winnipesaukee, and Paugus. The benefits of a Watershed Management Plan for Lake Opechee would include the identifying erosion sites, stormwater discharges, and priority improvement projects. A Watershed Plan for Lake Opechee would also mean that total project costs could approach \$100,000, requiring a funding guarantee by the grant applicant. The Committee discusses needing more information on cost estimates and funding obligations before committing Conservation funds as the funding guarantee in applying for this grant with NHDES. The Commission emphasizes the importance of coordinating with the Lake Opechee Preservation Association and other partners. They agree that additional information is needed before making a decision. They need to know about the grant including the scope, cost, and timing.

10. LIAISON, SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS, AND UPCOMING EVENTS

11. OTHER BUSINESS

D. Williams shares that The Wild & Scenic Film Festival hosted by the New Hampshire Rivers Council will be on March 27, 2026 in Concord. A Rivers Council storytelling event titled "What Lies Beneath" will be on February 26, 2026. D. Williams summarizes the ongoing climate and environmental legislation being considered by the New Hampshire Legislature.

12. STAFF REPORT

G. Draper updates the Commission. The next Conservation Commission meeting is scheduled for February 18, 2026 at 5:00 PM. The Jet Ski Races and Sled Dog special events were approved earlier today by the Special Events Events Review Committee. Several Bike Week applications and a summer concert application were approved as well. All City meetings staffed by the Planning Dept. are now livestreamed and available for public viewing. He shares that there were no power outages were reported in Laconia during the recent snowstorm.

13. ADJOURNMENT

D. Williams motions to adjourn. D. Hooberman seconds the motion. Unanimous. The meeting adjourns at 7:35 PM.