

NEW HAMPSHIRE FISH AND GAME DEPARTMENT

OCTOBER 11, 2022 COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Location: Claremont Community Center, 153 South Street, Claremont, NH 03741

Commissioners Present: J. Caveney, M. Hodgson, A.J. DeRosa, P. DeBow, R. Green, & B. Temple, M. Lachance, E. Stohl, C. Hodgdon, & S. Price, .

Commissioners absent/excused:

Executive Director Mason – Present

Chairman Green announced that Commissioner McInnis's term as Seacoast Commissioner ended in September of 2022, and reported that he did not wish to seek reappointment for another term; therefore, the Seacoast Commissioner's seat is currently vacant. He encouraged anyone interested in that seat, to reach out to Governor Sununu's Office and not the Commission.

Chairman Green called the meeting to order at 1:02p.m., and asked the audience to join in the pledge of allegiance. He informed the audience that the public is entitled to attend all Commission meetings and when recognized by the Chairman, the public may speak on any item on the agenda. The Chair reserves the right to limit comment to the extent necessary for the orderly conduct of the meeting.

ACTION ITEMS:

1. Commissioner M. Hodgson moved to amend the September 13, 2022 Commission Minutes, per below, and Commissioner J. Caveney seconded.

Amendment: Page 5 of the September 13, 2022 Commission Minutes, under Legislative Committee:

Should read: Commissioner M. Hodgson reported that the committee met the morning of the Commission Meeting and reviewed proposed impending legislation. As a cycle of improvement, the committee is working on a procedure with Department Personnel ~~DOP (Department of Personnel)~~ to have the Commission review proposed impending legislation & engage with stakeholders and constituents before the Commission takes a vote.

The motion carried with 6 in favor, 4 abstentions (M. Lachance, E. Stohl, C. Hodgdon & S. Price).

- 2.) Consent Agenda - The following items were grouped together and noticed as consent agenda items to expedite action on routine matters, which may not require public discussion. The Commission voted to approve these matters as presented. Commission members may remove certain items if further public input or discussion is deemed necessary.

Commissioner E. Stohl moved to approve consent agenda items 2a & 2b, as presented below, and Commissioner M. Hodgson seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

2a.) The Commission accepted the following donations totaling \$150.00 in memory of Richard C. Demanche, of Candia, NH, to be deposited into the Small Gifts & Donations Account:

- The Ledoux Family, Merrimack, NH - \$100.00
(Keith, Susan, Joe, Ashley, Tom, Laurel & Liz)

- Dan & Paula Harris, Hooksett, NH- \$ 50.00
\$150.00

2b.) The Commission accepted the donation of \$500.00 from Diana Stroud, in honor & appreciation for the services provided by the Search & Rescue Team on September 11, 2022, in safely assisting her off Mount Moosilauke in Benton, NH, after suffering a leg injury.

2c.) Dianne Timmins, Chief, Inland Fisheries Division, came before the Commission with additional information relative to the request to expend up to \$45,000 from the Fisheries Habitat Account, to purchase 5 backpack electrofishing units & accessories from Smith-Root, Inc. This request changed from 4 to 5 units to take advantage of quantity and exchange discounts.

Commissioner R. Green commended Dianne on the additional detailed information she provided to the Commission relative to this request.

Commissioner C. Hodgdon inquired as to how many staff members were trained to use this equipment.

Dianne responded that all of the Inland Fisheries staff are trained to use these devices.

Commissioner A.J. DeRosa moved to approve the request to expend up to \$45,000 from the Fisheries Habitat Account to purchase 5 backpack electrofishing units & accessories from Smith-Root, Inc., and Commissioner M. Hodgson seconded.

Commissioner Temple inquired as to the potential for having a mechanism in place where monies could be set aside for future purchases like this, like a continual replacement program.

Director Mason responded that we do not have such a mechanism in place for that, however, the Fisheries Habitat Account is a dedicated account, which allows us to utilize monies for purposes like this. By law, these requests require Commission approval each time and do not allow for a blanket approval.

Commissioner M. Hodgson stated that she'd like to see the first initial in front of she & Commissioner Hodgdon's names when transcribing the Commission minutes for clarity purposes.

The vote taken at the time was unanimous in the affirmative.

INFORMATION ITEMS:

- 1.) No financial statement reviewed this month.

Commissioner C. Hodgdon had a question on the financial statement, as it related to employee raises.

Director Mason stated that he would inquire with Kathy LaBonte, Chief, Business Division, and have her elaborate/explain in an email to the Commission.

2.) Pat Tate, Furbearer Project Leader, came before the Commission and provided background information on furbearing predator species. (See attached presentation).

Commissioner Temple inquired about fox ranges and as to whether or not there was any data as to how to change the perception of them being “bad”, such as a detailed information/fact sheets on other predators & what they consume, and such.

Pat responded that there is a great deal of scientific literature out there that talks about it, however, no matter what information you provide, it seems individuals who perceive them as “bad”, still remain critics. He stated, “Ultimately, I leave it up to them to make final judgement.”

Commissioner B. Temple inquired as to whether the department receives a lot of feedback from the farming or agricultural community indicating that they are having problems with predators, such as fox or coyotes killing calves.

Pat responded that every few years the department gets reports on occasion.

Director Mason stated that it does happen on occasion; however, farmers usually have their calves inside the barn. He reported that it has only happened to him once while living in the North Country.

Pat reported that in order to determine what is killing animals; a mortality study would need to be conducted by the agency on various species and then from the results, change methods to manage for mortality.

COMMITTEE STRUCTURE:

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE:

Public policy development & recommendations, as well as Commission advocacy before legislature.

Commissioner Price, Chair; Commissioners: Caveney, DeBow, Hodgson & Stohl.

Staff members: Kevin Jordan & Marty Mobley.

Commissioner S. Price publicly thanked the Commission & Director for all their support, cards & flowers sent to her in the recent passing of her Mother.

Commissioner S. Price reported that the committee met the morning of the October 11, 2022 Commission Meeting. She thanked Commissioner M. Hodgson for chairing the Legislative Committee Meeting last month.

DMV SUSPENDS LICENSES:

Commissioner S. Price moved to approve the wording relative to Non-payment of Search & Rescue Expenses and Commissioner M. Hodgson seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

LICENSE TWEAKS – DUCK STAMP & URBAN HUNTERS:

Commissioner S. Price reported that the Duck Stamp & Urban Hunters language would be in the form of two separate bills.

Commissioner P. DeBow moved to approve the first paragraph to amend RSA 209:6, II – Taking; Federal Duck Stamp and Commissioner S. Price seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Commissioner S. Price moved to approve the amendment of RSA 214:19;1, adding “*discharging firearms in urban areas is grounds for a hunting license suspension*”, and Commissioner E. Stohl seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

GAME CAMERAS:

Commissioner S. Price moved to approve the amendment of RSA 207:1, with the addition of a new Section RSA 207:63, relative to Definitions & Use of Game Cameras, and Commissioner E. Stohl seconded.

Commissioner P. DeBow reported that he originally was pressing for more details on this legislation, however, stated that they have changed the language enough that it now satisfies him. He elaborated that changing the language to “*permission*”, rather than “*written permission*”, makes a big difference in his opinion. He stated, “I reversed course on this and now support it.”

The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

SEASONAL CAMP LEASE PROGRAM:

Commissioner S. Price moved to approve the amendment to RSA 212:10-b, Acquisition of Land, Etc.; Leases and Privileges, and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded.

Commissioner M. Hodgson stated that she was not clear on the problem that is trying to be solved.

Dan Bergeron, Chief, Wildlife Division, reported that this streamlines the process that the department currently has to go through and brings it in line with other existing RSA’s. He reported that the department does not like to purchase properties with camps on them; however, would like to have a system in place that allows the department to maintain them, if so. He further reported that there was nothing in existing RSAs to address that, and that this was a housekeeping measure.

Commissioner M. Hodgson stated that the language in RSA 212:10-b, states, “*The Executive Director of the Fish & Game Department may execute leases or contracts for the short-term use of buildings or lands owned by the Department. All such leases or contracts extending for a period of more than 5 years or for an annual consideration of more than \$5,000 shall be approved by the Governor.*”

She stated, “0-5 years does not seem like short-term to me. It reads, “*For a period of more than 5 years or for an annual consideration of more than \$5,000 shall be approved by the Governor.*” She further stated that 5 years seems like a large leap to overcome going from 30 days to 5 years, and seems contradictory.

She inquired as to how the current RSA prevents the department from doing this.

Director Mason responded that it does not prevent us from doing so, it makes it easier and is less time consuming for staff.

Chairman R. Green stated that he agreed with Commissioner M. Hodgson and stated that going from 30 days to 5 years appears to be a way to skirt the Executive Council.

Dan Bergeron responded that this just brings things in-line with other state agencies.

Commissioner R. Green stated that he was not comfortable with it.

The vote taken at this time carried with 8 in favor, 2 opposed (R. Green & M. Hodgson)

NON-GAME DONATIONS:

Commissioner P. DeBow moved to support amending RSA 206-33-a Gifts & Donations and Commissioner E. Stohl seconded.

Commissioner S. Price reported that this was another housekeeping measure, removing the requirement for smaller nongame donations to be brought before the Commission for approval. Commissioners will receive an annual report listing those donations.

Dan Bergeron stated that other accounts have similar exemptions.

Director Mason clarified that this only applies for nongame donations.

A vote taken at this time was unanimous in the affirmative.

OHRVs:

Commissioner P. DeBow moved to approve amending both RSA 215-A: 21 & RSA 215-A: 30, I, as presented.

Chairman R. Green asked that the two amendments be voted on separately.

Commissioner P. DeBow withdrew his original motion at this time.

Commissioner P. DeBow moved to amend Part A (RSA 215-A: 21), inserting: *“No OHRV registered for use on a way, in this state or any other jurisdiction, except OHRV’s registered for the purpose under RSA 261:410a, can be used recreationally on a designated OHRV trails”* and Commissioner M. Hodgson seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Commissioner E. Stohl moved to amend Part B (RSA 215-A:30, I, inserting: *“Operation of OHRV’s on public ways, operation of OHRVs with an exhaust louder than 96 decibels, or operation of an OHRV during the period ½ hour after sunset and ½ hour before sunrise shall procure a permit from the Executive Director”* and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

TREE STANDS:

Commissioner P. DeBow moved to amend RSA 207:36-a, relative to; Use of Tree Stands, Observation Blinds, and Pit Blinds, to include the following language and Commissioner E. Stohl seconded:

IV. No person shall construct a permanent tree stand or observation blind without express written permission from the property owner or designee.

V. A portable or temporary tree stand or observation blind that does not violate paragraphs I or II of this section may be erected on the land of another between August 1 and December 31 of a calendar year. All portable or temporary tree stands or observation blinds shall be removed from the property by January 1, unless allowed by express written permission from the property owner or designee.

The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Commissioner S. Price reported that she plans to schedule a standing Legislative Committee Meeting to take place at 11:00 a.m., prior to every Commission Meeting for the next 5 months.

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE: Commission professional development, education & policy recommendations related to Commission conduct & activities.

Commissioner Caveney, Chair; Commissioners: Lachance & Temple.

Staff member: Cheri Patterson.

Commissioner J. Caveney reported that the committee met the morning of the Commission Meeting and reviewed more items. He further reported that the committee plans to bring updates to the full board in December for review, and hopefully for a vote in January of 2023.

SUSTAINABILITY & STRATEGIC PLANNING: Agency funding, development & oversight of strategic plan.

Commissioner Hodgdon, Chair; Commissioners: Caveney, DeRosa, Hodgson & Stohl.

Staff member: Scott Mason.

Commissioner C. Hodgdon reported that the next committee meeting would take place on October 18, 2022, @ 4pm, at F&G HQ. He reported that the purpose of the meeting is to review the Division's Planning Matrix submissions by the Division Chiefs, and to finalize the public survey.

RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE: Policy recommendations related to agency infrastructure; including facilities, public access, habitat & wildlife.

Commissioner Temple, Chair; Commissioners: Caveney, DeRosa, McInnis & Lachance.

Staff member: Dianne Timmins.

Commissioner Temple reported there was nothing specific to report and that the committee would most likely meet next month, prior to the Commission Meeting.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT & EDUCATION: Engagement, partnership, awards, public recognition & education strategies for the public & interest groups.

Commissioner DeRosa Chair; Commissioners: DeBow, Hodgdon & Price.
Staff members: Dan Bergeron, Kevin Jordan & Cheri Patterson.

Commissioner A.J. DeRosa reported that the committee met and discussed its first priority, which is to make a strong effort to clarify the role of the Commission & how to engage the Commission, in order to make it a black & white process.

He further reported that the committee agreed that each Commissioner that has served on the Commission would receive a plaque of recognition from the Commission.

At this time, Commissioner A.J. DeRosa moved that each Commissioner serving on the Fish & Game Commission receive a plaque recognizing their contributions and Commissioner P. DeBow seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

LAKES MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE: Commissioner Price.

Chairman R. Green reported that the Commission's representative has not been formally approved by The Governor & Council as of yet.

NH RIVERS MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE: Commissioner Hodgdon.

Chairman R. Green reported the Commission's representative has not been formally approved by The Governor & Council as of yet.

OLD BUSINESS: There was no old business heard.

NEW BUSINESS: There was no new business heard.

COMMISSIONERS REPORTS: Commissioners will report on their recent activities as it relates to Fish & Game Commission duties and responsibilities. This is an informational item only.

Commissioner E. Stohl announced that he was appointed by the Speaker of the House to serve on CT Lakes Citizen's Advisory Committee. He reported that the Recreation Committee has been discussing one of the hot topics, OHRV Issues. He reported that the next meeting would take place in a few weeks.

Chairman R. Green asked that Commissioner E. Stohl update the Commission each month on that committee's activities & discussions. Commissioner E. Stohl agreed.

Commissioner B. Temple thanked everyone for coming to Claremont for the Commission Meeting and stated that there was good public turnout.

He further reported that he participated in The NH Trap Shooting Association's Championships, with approximately 150 shooters and stated that it was a good experience.

Commissioner M. Hodgson offered to assist seacoast constituents in any way during the Seacoast Commissioner vacancy.

At this time, Director Mason introduced Deirdre Grimes, HR Administrator. He reported that Dee comes to F&G from Crotched Mountain.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT: The Director will report on recent department activities. This is an information item only.

- Director Mason reported that tonight, October 11, 2022, is the third Annual Farm Bureau Meeting that he has been invited to attend. He reported that discussions have revolved around game cameras and tree stand legislation. .
- Director Mason reported that he attended The Wildlife Heritage Foundation's North Woods Brewery Introduction of the Forever Locked Double IPA. He reported that it was a good kickoff of the beer and a good fundraising event for the Foundation.
- He reported that thanks to Rob Johnson, Director Mason was invited to have lunch with The President of the American Farm Bureau. He reported that the President was very interested in NH's turkey population.
- Director Mason proposed the following presentation schedule for the January – March, 2023, Commission Meetings, to take place at F&G HQ, as follows:

January- 2023: NH Trout Unlimited – present on programs & interactions with the Department.

February-2023: Cheri Patterson, Chief, Marine Division – Offshore Wind Presentation.

March-2023: Wildlife Division - presentation on legal hound-hunting methods in NH.

At time time, Chairman R. Green moved to hold the January – March, 2023, Commission Meetings at F&G HQ, 11 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH, with the ability to adjust the presentation schedule if the need arise, and to include the above presentations schedule and Commissioner E. Stohl seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC:

Dianne Richardson, inquired as to whether fishers in NH were being killed by bobcat.

Pat Tate, Furbearer Project Leader, responded, “yes”, bobcats are a predator of fisher, although we do not know to the extent that it happens.

She reported that she approached the department's social media staff and inquired if they could make a post about RSA 207:5 & RSA 466:42, a. She reported that the department indicated the post would need to be compiled by The Law Enforcement Division. She stated that it would be a good reminder to all that these two laws do exist and could be enforced for harassing hunters.

Tom Cross, Washington, NH, reported that he sent the Commission a communication back in February, of 2022, regarding radio collared hunting dogs chasing coyotes. He reported that he has seen this take place in real life on his property in Washington, NH and stated, "This is not hunting." He asked, "Please give the coyote some relief."

Weldon Bosworth, Gilford, NH, referred to the fisher chart of Pat Tate's earlier furbearer presentation. He reported that he disagrees with the chart, as it indicates only a slight decrease and emphasized the importance of how far back you conduct your research. He reported that he sent the Commission a chart from 1990, and stated that NH was unique in having such good catch per unit data and felt that data should be included in the department's research. He further reported that he felt several predator species were on the decline, as there is a decrease in catch per effort and in harvest.

Jack Hurley, Claremont, NH, thanked the Commission for holding a meeting in Claremont. He reported that he enjoys wildlife, wildlife watching, as he finds it spiritually uplifting. He reported that there was nobody on the Commission that represents his concerns or issues, as he does not want wildlife killed. He further reported that he resents the fact that you must hold a license to kill in order to serve on the Fish & Game Commission. He stated, "There needs to be other voices."

At this time, 3:45 p.m., Commissioner M. Hodgson moved to adjourn and Commissioner E. Stohl seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Ray Green, Chairman
NH Fish & Game Commission