



**Lower Connecticut River Land Trust  
01/29/20 MEETING MINUTES  
LCRVCOG Office, 145 Dennison Rd., Essex**

**Board Members in Attendance:** Lauren Gister (Chester), Melvin Woody (Gateway), Kristina White (Lyme Land Trust), David Brown (Middlesex Land Trust), Marilyn Gleeson (E. Haddam Land Trust)

**Board Members Absent:** Ed Bailey (Middlefield), Noel Bishop (Westbrook)

**Members & Others in Attendance:** Sam Gold, Margot Burns & Eliza LoPresti (RiverCOG), Gail Reynolds (Haddam Land Trust), Tim Griswold (Old Lyme)

The meeting was called to order at 10:07 am by President Lauren Gister.

**Approval of Minutes of Past Meeting(s)**

RiverCOG staff was unable to retrieve minutes off the server because of the recent ransomware attack. Sam gave an update on that continuing situation.

**Motion:** To table approval of minutes.

**Motion made by:** Melvin Woody

**Seconded by:** Kristina White

**Voted:** Motion approved unanimously

**Board Organization & Leadership**

Because Ed Bailey and Noel Bishop were stuck at their town halls, this discussion will be held at another time. Perhaps board members will be interested in taking on specific roles or specific projects. This led to a larger discussion on the general goals/work plan for the land trust. It was noted that the conservation plan could be reviewed toward this end. Fundraising for specific projects or services was also suggested (such as due diligence funding).

It was discussed that the LCRLT could offer advisory support to land trusts dealing with land donations, acquisitions, etc. Perhaps a checklist could be created, E. Haddam land trust has a land acquisition checklist and evaluation form that can possibly be utilized. The LCRLT could be a conduit for information and experience, or function as a review board for land donations and other land deals as a membership benefit. The web page can be a clearinghouse of information. An annual workshop as part of a meeting was discussed. Topic ideas for this were accreditation of land trusts, easements, pros & cons of accepting land, and invasive species planning for that land, oversight and reporting requirements. Sam noted that the LTE

meetings have been the venue over the years where land trusts come for the educational component. The other main objective is fundraising.

### **Deep River Property**

A parcel of 100 acres is for sale in Deep River on Route 145 just south of Chester airport. The land connects two conserved blocks of land. The parcel is in our priority conservation corridor in the plan. It is not developed now, but it could potentially be. Margot contacted the state; DEEP is not interested in the short term. The Deep River land trust is interested in working on the parcel with the LCRLT. There was discussion on what the LCRLT's role would be in this situation. There was general consensus that coaching the Deep River land trust in an advisory capacity would be acceptable. Kristina suggested the LTE would be a good venue for help for DR Land Trust. Margot feels that this parcel is a priority for the region as it would conserve a lot of land and connects two important pieces of land.

Discussion was held on instituting a protocol for the local land trusts to come to the LCRLT with proposals on what they are interested in and what they need. This would help establish priorities. Additionally, the land trust is currently without funding resources and is not in a position to provide for land acquisitions.

This led to another discussion on fundraising and the need for strategy for finding funds and learning about potential donors. Ideas such as fundraising for a matching donation and having a program to be funded were discussed. Local foundations, such as one that Kristina knows about in Lyme, could also be a funding source. Disclosing these funding applications was discussed to prevent the perception of conflict of interest. Strategies for finding out which foundations (national and regional) are interested in conservation were discussed.

Sam suggested using the conservation plan to identify projects of regional significance and perhaps using a summer intern to create a database of parcels and to follow up with local land trusts and/or compare it with the land trust's plans. Land owner communication was also stressed. There could also be a list of potential funding sources and ideas. A universal message that donors hear will need to be crafted. The LCRLT as a repository of historical information on land trusts, grants, etc.

Sam suggested creating a memo/proposal on what the solid first steps will be for the LCRLT.

### **Bafflin Foundation Update**

The LCRLT was turned down for funding without explanation. Melvin Woody and David Brown volunteered to talk to the foundation to learn more about how to make ourselves more competitive.

### **Confidentiality/Anonymity & Conflict**

The new members should fill these out. There will be a future committee structure

### **Highstead/CT Audubon Initiative for Bird Conservation**

Highstead reached out to Margot about the possibility of participation in a program with a New England-wide project. This was discussed; it was felt that money typically stays up in the northern New England states. Margot held a discussion with them about giving back to our state too and connecting with the coast to be inclusive with all the regional conservation partners.

### **Other Business**

The next meeting will be February 27<sup>th</sup>, which is the fourth Thursday of the month. Subsequent meetings will be held on the third Thursday of the month at 10:00 am. A calendar of meeting dates will be distributed.

### **Adjourn**

**Motion:** To adjourn the meeting at 12:04 pm.

**Motion made by:** Kristina White

**Seconded by:** Lauren Gister

**Voted:** Motion approved unanimously