

**Town of Chester
Conservation Commission
June 12, 2018
7:00 PM
Approved Minutes**

Present:

Acting Chairman Ted Broadwater
Aaron Hume
Deb Munson
Kristina Snyder
Victor Chouinard
Kathleen Neff Ragsdale

Absent:

Chairman Chuck Myette
Selectmen Liaison Joseph Hagan
Baron Richardson

Guests:

Kate Wilkins (Tighe & Bond)
Matt Cardin, Eversource

Call to Order:

Acting Chairman Ted Broadwater (Mr. Broadwater) called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.

Review of Minutes May 2018

Ms. Munson proposed amending the minutes as follows:

Correct spelling of Kristina Snyder throughout; Line 20 change "at" to "as"

Mrs. Ragsdale motioned to accept the minutes as amended. Ms. Snyder seconded her motion. Mr. Hume and Mr. Broadwater abstained. With four in favor, so moved.

New Business:

Mr. Broadwater announced that Selectman Joe Hagan would be the Commission's new Selectman Liaison and that Mrs. Ragsdale had been appointed to the Wason Pond Commission.

Eversource Project

Mr. Broadwater invited Ms. Wilkins and Mr. Cardin to the meeting table.

Mr. Cardin from Eversource stated that they were here to provide an informational presentation concerning the scope of the work to be done in Chester.

Mr. Cardin stated that Eversource had corresponded with Chairman Myette concerning the project. While Mr. Cardin believed that no application or permit was required due to the scope of the work in the wetlands, which was under one acre, he stated that Eversource wanted to keep the community informed.

Ms. Wilkins advised that her company, Tighe & Bond, contracted with Eversource as environmental consultants and would be on hand to supervise and field any concerns.

Mr. Cardin advised that Eversource would be working to replace deficient and weathered wooden structures that had been identified with similar looking steel-like poles with cross arms.

Ms. Wilkins provided copies of a map to each of the Commission members and advised of some of the methods that were used to identify sensitive areas, with red dots indicating proposed structures and access roads shown with black dashes or yellow for existing access routes. Ms. Wilkins explained that the work areas would be covered with temporary protective mats laid on top that the equipment would travel over and those would then be removed. The work pad area is 100'x100' offset 70'x30.'

Mr. Cardin advised that the disturbed area would be .43 acres.

Ms. Munson asked from where to where?

Ms. Wilkins responded that the work area would be off Pingree Hill Road, Auburn/Chester to Lane Road at Raymond.

Mrs. Ragsdale asked how large the structures would be?

Mr. Cardin stated that the 345-80 are 80' high, some larger, as the load increased, the height would need to increase, and they were planning for the future of critical infrastructure which is assessed cyclically.

Ms. Wilkins added that there was damage to the wooden structures from woodpeckers and they had also seen bear marks.

Mr. Chouinard asked if the existing poles were creosote covered?

Mr. Cardin answered that they were not and mostly cedar.

Mr. Broadwater expressed his concerns that the disturbed area appeared to be more than one acre in under a year and asked if this was something the State ever monitored.

Mr. Cardin responded that he had a site meeting on Monday afternoon and discussed some of the policy guidelines in their manual, correspondence with Fish & Game, NH Heritage and identifying any endangered species.

Ms. Wilkins added that they looked for compliance, thing such as erosion, mulching, seeding and provided feedback to Eversource.

Ms. Munson expressed concerns with weather, the right of way, the road not being stoned gravel to the roadway and dirt tracking to the road.

Mr. Broadwater asked if there was private road access?

Mr. Cardin explained that if they needed temporary access outside of their permanent access area, they had outreach folks who would communicate with owners and try to get something in writing.

Ms. Munson advised that off Candia Road is a huge wetland.

Ms. Wilkins advised that they had walked the area and wanted to avoid the need to cut several trees in the Old Chester Turnpike area.

Mr. Broadwater stated that there was some tough access points and traffic in the power line construction area and asked whether anything would be done to limit the public.

Mr. Cardin responded that there would be dozers, excavators, crane and bucket trucks, a gravel road to the pads and may install gates or temporary barriers. Some of the property is fee-owned and some is easement. ATVs are not allowed anyway.

Mr. Chouinard explained that there were very few places where ATVs were legally allowed and had to be specified and the Chester PD could catch them coming out of there.

Ms. Munson advised that where she lived off 121, someone put up Jersey barriers and they go around them or drive out there after midnight in trucks, break down, make noise, party and no one stops them. A fence is needed, cabling so they can't just enter at a different spot. You would think they would want to protect the area from vandalism and other threats.

Mr. Cardin advised of the expense and long service interruptions when people go out and shoot at the transmission lines and cut off connectivity adding that they were not in charge of the outage schedules.

Mr. Cardin responded that Eversource did their best but there was no silver bullet, it's a cost issue.

Ms. Snyder asked if there were signs, signs posting and warning of consequences.

Mr. Cardin added that sometimes owners put up game cameras which have a tendency to walk away.

Mr. Hume expressed concerns about motorized vehicles. Mr. Broadwater agreed that there was confusion, people just don't know.

Ms. Munson expressed concerns about threatened and endangered species such as, the Blanding's turtles, Hog nose snake, spotted turtles, wood turtles, rare plants and the Black Racer snakes and advised that it was a common practice to cut the wooden poles down to a height and leave them as the racers liked to nest beneath them for some reason. Mr. Broadwater advised that it's likely if you spot them after September there is a nest or den nearby. Ms. Wilkins advised that the racers were not venomous but not friendly either and that no rare plants had been identified in the area of concern.

Mr. Broadwater stated, "you own the right of way, Old Chester Turnpike is a Class 6 road."

Ms. Munson added that if you improve these access roads, and then leave them that way, they will have a difficult time keeping people out of there.

Mr. Cardin advised that they would be in touch to provide an 800 number for contacting Eversource as well as language they could publish on the Town's website which would be included in that email.

Mr. Broadwater stated that he would hold on to a map-set.

Mr. Cardin and Ms. Wilkins departed the meeting at 7:55 pm.

Ms. Munson advised that she knew Elizabeth for years at Eversource and used to work with her.

Treasurer's Report

Mr. Broadwater indicated that there were no new bills, but he had not accessed the mailbox.

Subcommittee Reports

Strategic Land Protection Committee

Ms. Munson advised that she had attended that meeting and as turnout was low, the future of the committee was uncertain.

Mr. Broadwater indicated that there may be a need to ratify that decision.

Trails (Aaron)

Mr. Hume advised that he had just gotten finished with school and would have more free time and expected to be finished on Friday and would have something to show and would email Chairman Myette rather than waiting another month and would need to update a bit, if they wanted him to, once Eversource goes in.

Mr. Hume advised that the ARC GIS software he was using had a student license caveat, so he would not be charging, the professional version was more expensive.

Ms. Munson stated that she would like to get software they could all use on a laptop in the office.

Mr. Broadwater asked Mr. Hume if he could find out about the cost of purchasing the ARC GIS software.

Spring Hill Farm

Mrs. Ragsdale advised that she went to a Food Scaping Class last Saturday at the Farm that was put on by Cindy LeBlanc and Tiffany Coroka from Agriculture Commission which demonstrated how herbs and vegetables could be grown in with other landscaping. Mrs. Ragsdale expressed that it was her first visit to the Farm, she would have liked to have seen a larger turnout for the event and offered her assistance with Public Relations.

Wason Pond Conservation Area

Mr. Broadwater read from the draft minutes of their last meeting. The Cops & Bobbers event had been a success. Chester P.D. still had no response to their ad for a Ranger and had increased the offered hourly wage.

Easements, Monitoring & Stewardship

Mr. Broadwater advised that Hawkins had signed, and it was officially in the books (approaching the map to show the location). It will now go before the BOS. The Registry of Deeds is extremely fussy about the format and required a 3" margin at the top.

Miscellaneous

Conservation Workshop (Deb)

Ms. Munson passed around the 2008 Land Trust Conservation Stewardship Manual which she indicated was loaded with useful forms and how-tos, if anyone would like to borrow it. Mr. Chouinard indicated that he was interested.

Ms. Munson indicated that she had brought in a map for the proposed Wildlife Action Plan that the Commission is supposed to update. Ms. Munson indicated some of the highlighted areas, such as the purple area that designated some of the best, suitable areas for wildlife. Mr. Hume advised that he was familiar with the plan and warned that areas that are suitable for some species are not as suitable for others.

Ms. Munson advised that she had attended a training event where groups were assembled and asked to consider a suitable spot for a development taking into consideration the importance and priority of features, wildlife, habitats, wetlands and referenced *dirttotreestowildlife*.

Next Meeting: July 10, 2018

Adjournment

Mrs. Ragsdale motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 pm. Mr. Broadwater seconded her motion, with all in favor, so moved.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy J. Hoijer
Recording Secretary