

**Town of Chester
Conservation Commission
May 12, 2020
7:00 PM
Virtual Meeting
Approved Minutes**

Present (Remotely):

Chairman Victor Chouinard
Deb Munson
Kristina Snyder
Ted Broadwater
Kathleen Neff Ragsdale
Rick Sibley
Aaron Hume, Alternate
Selectman Chuck Myette, Liaison

Absent:

Guests:

CCTV

Call to Order:

Chairman Chouinard called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

Under the emergency provisions of RSA 91A, this meeting is being conducted electronically and will be recorded, via dial-in, 1 929 436 2866, internet at <https://zoom.us/j/98130617570> as well as broadcast on Channel 20 and streamed on <http://vod.chesterctv.com>

NEW BUSINESS

1. Excavation Permit – Mill Pine Village, Map 10, Lot 1

Chair Chouinard advised the Commission a notice of excavation has been received at the Mill Pine Village site, where they have run a gravel pit for years that was going to be discontinued. This is across the Exeter River, from the Loranger property. Chair Chouinard questioned how the site has been being monitored. The buffer appears to have a lot of vegetation still.

2. Dredge & Fill for Menard, 129 Lane Road, Map 12, Lot 14-2

Chair Chouinard advised the Commission a NHDES notice of Incomplete Wetlands Dredge and Fill Permit Application was received for Lane Road. The Conservation Commission should contact the owner for a site walk. Chair Chouinard indicated the description noted a bridge

rebuild and there was possibly a road or driveway crossing wetlands. Chair Chouinard noted it was a positive step when an owner makes efforts to spend money on engineering, but the Commission needs to understand the entire scope of the project.

3. Trail Maps

Selectman Myette reported a complaint was received from Mrs. Hazelton when the trail maps for the South Woods parcel were put up on the Town webpage that they erroneously included private property. Selectman Myette took full responsibility for putting the maps up before the maps were vetted for private property and will take responsibility for taking them back. The maps won't be distributed until the Commission can go through and cleanse out the Class VI and Town-owned properties and contact owners first. Mr. Hume indicated maps that were sent to SNHP should be pulled back and not used until they can be corrected. Mr. Hume noted there is some difficulty mapping in the field because there is no boundary lines on the ground and some owners post and others do not. Selectman Myette indicated with the parking currently closed at Wason Pond due to COVID-19 and seasonal congestion, the Board hopes to encourage residents to use other Conservation and Town owned trails of which there are about 2,000 acres.

Mr. Hume indicated he has renewed his GIS licensing and it is not much of an issue to remove private property from the maps entirely. It will change the shape of the maps. A letter can be drafted to get input from homeowners. Selectman Myette recommended taking on a couple of parcels at a time. Mr. Broadwater recommended starting with those that have only a couple of property owners abutting a larger parcel.

Ms. Munson asked about trespassing and Selectman Myette explained the right to trespass where parcels are not posted. Ms. Munson noted information could be put in the letter so private owners understand they are not liable to be sued for injuries when not charging for the use. Selectman Myette indicated the letter would be reviewed by town counsel before it goes out. Mr. Broadwater offered to draft the letter. Ms. Munson noted the private properties could be studied for future purchases or easements.

Mr. Hume noted he walked a trail in Sandown today and picked up some trash. There are a lot of water impediments in the transmission line area between Chester and Sandown.

OLD BUSINESS

3. Review Minutes – April 14, 2020

Mrs. Neff Ragsdale recommended edits to Line 39. Ms. Snyder recommended edits to Line 45.

Mrs. Neff Ragsdale motioned to accept the April 14, 2020 minutes, as amended. Mr. Hume seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Chouinard – aye, Snyder – aye, Munson – aye, Hume – aye, Neff Ragsdale – aye, Broadwater – aye and Myette - aye. With all in favor the motion passed unanimously.

4. Subcommittee reports

A. Strategic Land Protection Committee – SLPC

Mrs. Neff Ragsdale motioned to go into non-public session pursuant to 91-A:3(II)(d). Ms. Snyder seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette –

aye, Hume – aye, Snyder – aye, Sibley – aye, Neff-Ragsdale – aye, Munson – aye, Chouinard – aye, Broadwater – aye. With all in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was closed to the public at 8:31 PM.

Ms. Snyder motioned to come out of non-public session at 9:19 PM and seal the minutes of both non-public sessions indefinitely. Mrs. Neff Ragsdale seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Hume – aye, Myette – aye, Munson – aye, Sibley – aye, Neff Ragsdale – aye, Snyder – aye, Chouinard – aye, Broadwater – aye. With all in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was reopened to the public at 9:19 PM.

B. Treasurer's Report (Kathie)

Mrs. Neff Ragsdale reported the operating budget had \$6.90 in expenditures this month, with a total of \$1,369.71 spent for the year, which is \$415.71 over budget.

Mrs. Neff Ragsdale reported balances in the following accounts:

Conservation \$ 83,388.08 beginning balance
 + 27.85 interest
 - 583.00 easement monitoring with RCCD
 \$ 82,832.73 ending balance

Forestry + 13.67 interest
 \$ 41,174.04 ending balance

Lincoln Lane + 1.03 interest
 \$ 3,087.40 ending balance

Emerson + 3.39 interest
 \$ 10,212.01 ending balance

Jumbo CD + 340.08 interest
 \$402,059.74 ending balance

Mr. Broadwater motioned to accept the Treasurer's Report, as stated. Mr. Hume seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Myette – aye, Chouinard - aye, Hume – aye, Munson – aye, Snyder – aye, Sibley – aye Neff Ragsdale – aye, Broadwater – aye. With all in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

C. Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee (Ted/Kristina)

Ms. Snyder noted there were technical difficulties at the regular meeting and the Committee met again. Geary Farms is operating the high tunnel and have cleaned it out are planting and doing very well. There was a question about being able to use the food truck, with the easement. Selectman Myette indicated the easement use is different

126 than Wason which is recreational. It is farm property and expected to be commercial
127 farm use.

128
129 Ms. Snyder noted Bob Pepper gave a high estimate for haying the fields. Selectman
130 Myette added that Mr. Pepper will do some of the haying and Rich LeBlanc will do some.
131 Fertilizer is being applied across from the high tunnel. Some bales of hay were sold last
132 year at \$3/bale, totaling \$500 to the Trust. Mr. Pepper will focus on removing rocks and
133 a couple of trees on Lane Road and he will be reimbursed for use of his backhoe and
134 fuel. Road Agent Oleson has agreed to help him with that.

135
136 Ms. Snyder continued; all activities have been shut down. There is no decision on the
137 Fall Festival and hopefully they will know something by the June meeting. The Trail ride
138 scheduled for September has issues about the requirement for insurance by the TRC
139 and Town Administrator Doda has not been in contact with Ms. Soutter about that. The
140 trail ride was to start on the Soutter property go across to SHF and then to other
141 properties. The farmhouse has issues with the bathroom floor rotting. Mr. Oleson
142 estimated \$25,000 in repairs. An engineer is recommended to look at ADA and code
143 compliance.

144
145 D. Agricultural Commission

146 Selectman Myette indicated Mrs. LeBlanc plans to continue with planting at the Farm in
147 preparation for the Foodscaping Class and will hold the class if she is able. Currently
148 there are no gatherings of more than ten people allowed but the class had 8-10 people
149 last year.

150 E. Wason Pond Conservation & Recreation Commission (Kristina)

151 Mrs. Neff Ragsdale reported WPC&RC are meeting again tomorrow by Zoom to
152 recommend that the Board of Selectmen reopen the parking area with a limited number
153 of spaces.

154 Selectman Myette indicated the Selectmen made the decision after a lot of internal
155 discussion with the CDC, Police Department and the State and Federal guidelines.
156 Selectman "Doc" Hagan is on the front lines and has seen other pandemics and
157 recommends people stay home and control as best as we can.

158 Mrs. Neff Ragsdale noted the playground and fields were closed due to the number of
159 visitors increasing and use by people out of Town and out of State and not wanting to
160 put anyone in danger. The Board of Selectmen recommended WPC&RC come up with
161 a plan.

162 Ms. Snyder noted the beavers came back and she and Mr. Chouinard went down and
163 cleaned out under the bridge as best as they can. They plan to go again this week with
164 a system to pull the dam apart completely.

165 Ms. Snyder noticed a lot of fishing lines and hooks in the trees, bushes, water and in the
166 beaver dam itself and recommends putting some receptacles in which could be cleaned
167 out regularly. The fishing lines and hooks are a danger to nesting birds and chicks who
168 get wrapped up in them. The receptacles are 6' PVC about 18" long and also promote

awareness. One could be installed at the footbridge where most of the lines and hooks were seen and another by the covered bridge. Selectman Myette offered to donate the metal fence posts and driver to install them. Mr. Broadwater will send out a link to the NOVA program he watched on beaver activity. Ms. Snyder noted last year they spoke with an expert on ways to outsmart the beavers with devices.

Ms. Snyder noted Dick Lewis will be going out to take down trees. They will not be chipping them but putting them off to the side. Mr. Chouinard flagged a few additional trees he noticed that were hazardous and should come down. None appeared to be active habitats. Selectman Myette walked the area with Mr. Lewis and noticed there were not as many dead trees in the area where the wooly adelgids were.

F. Easements, Monitoring & Stewardship

Chair Chouinard indicated Lincoln Lane monitoring will be re-scheduled and will be first on the list when the Commission gets back out.

Mr. Chouinard noted RCCD is not taking any new easements for monitoring. Selectman Myette noted the funds in the Emerson account were for monitoring. Mr. Hume may be available to helping out with monitoring. Ms. Munson noted there are training classes available which Chair Chouinard and Ms. Snyder attended with her. The Commission discussed rates for monitoring per parcel which were about \$200 flat fee plus per acre. Ms. Hoijer will email some samples of monitoring and baselines that were done recently

PLAN REVIEWS

None

MISCELLANEOUS

5. Dandelion Contest

Ms. Snyder posted the contest on Facebook and Chester Front Porch Chatter and it got a decent interest and kudos from the Pollinator Pathways group. A few entries were received already and she has picked up some prizes which include baskets from Folsom's Sugar House and Bittersweet Blessings who were both very generous and went above and beyond the \$35 recommendation and she will get a gift card from Chester General Store. Entries are being accepted until Memorial Day when they will judge the winners.

Ms. Snyder asked about the criteria. Mrs. Neff Ragsdale noted originally it was to be the most dandelions but some of the entries are very artistic. Ms. Munson recommended a first prize for most dandelions and prizes for other categories. It has the potential to grow if the contest grows each year. Mr. Sibley agreed it had a great local charm and he will look into getting some coffee cups made up for prizes.

6. Powerlines

Selectman Myette noted a few weeks ago Fish & Game came out and issued about 30 citations and confiscated illegal drugs and went back out again, last Sunday. There have been a lot of complaints with people being home, using ATVs anywhere they want. Pomp Road, a Class VI road, had to be gated. There has been a lot of ATV erosion the past year.

208 Selectman Myette advised that the Planning Board and Police Department have contacted
209 Eversource and are trying to work with them on the property they own and to get them to
210 unimproved the roads they created when they are done. The Police Department may be able to
211 get an ATV donated to help with monitoring. Chair Chouinard noted fines would be a deterrent.
212 Mr. Hume was hopeful word of mouth would spread that it is being enforced.

213 Ms. Munson took some pictures. The roads that were cut in are super highways. Erosion is
214 happening all over because they are going around barriers and getting trucks mudded and stuck
215 not realizing the damage they are doing to wildlife habitats and the wetlands.

216 Chair Chouinard asked about extending guardrails which looks good and is a deterrent. Mr.
217 Broadwater noted Eversource was supposed to meet with the Town and it fell through the
218 cracks. The signs that were promised need to be put up and they need to be brought into a
219 meeting to support that. Chair Chouinard recommended coordinating that with the Police Chief
220 and having Fish & Game present. Ms. Snyder noted Colonel Jordan will go. Mr. Broadwater
221 noted the Zoom meetings are easy and practical so they may be more willing when they don't
222 have to travel. Mr. Broadwater noted there were guardrails near his property and boulders were
223 tried to block the trail which were moved. Perhaps the guardrails aren't long enough to be a
224 deterrent.

225 Ms. Snyder noted wildlife is a big concern. Pingree Hill has been mowed down completely and
226 is wide open. She has seen spotted turtles on the road and a car could drive through easily.
227 More education needs to be done. Mr. Broadwater agreed. People want to traverse the entire
228 power line and when they can't, they will go through wetlands and private property to connect
229 and do more damage.

230 7. North Pond Kiosk

231 Mr. Sibley plans to go out and wash it Thursday and stain the kiosk on Saturday or sometime
232 next week.

233 Mrs. Neff Ragsdale added she is meeting with the botanist at the site tomorrow and had
234 success getting in touch with Greg Lowell who did the original kiosk and he provided the
235 material. Another sheet of plexiglass should be installed, something heavier. A before and after
236 picture could be posted on Front Porch Chatter to promote awareness. There is no trail there
237 now but it could be connected to the Grimes easement at some point. The kiosk at Forsaith
238 Forest is a beautiful example.

239 8. Loranger Property – Tree Stand

240 Chair Chouinard sent out a letter about the tree stand and got a response. The owner was
241 surprised the property had changed hands. Chair Chouinard will go out again in a couple of
242 weeks to make sure the tree stand has been taken down. Ms. Snyder after speaking with
243 Colonel Jordan at Fish & Game recommended the Commission adopt a policy and post it on the
244 website. Selectman Myette recommended using the Fish & Game guidance and bringing it to
245 the Selectmen to adopt.

246 9. Earth Day 2020

247 Chair Chouinard reported that he and Ms. Snyder cleaned up the Loranger property on Earth
248 Day. Selectman Myette noted he cleaned up $\frac{3}{4}$ mile on Fremont Road and ABI picked up most
249 of the trash bags but couldn't take ones with boards in them and such.

250 **Adjournment**

251 ***Mrs. Neff Ragsdale motioned to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Snyder seconded the motion.***
252 ***A roll call vote was taken Chouinard – aye, Snyder – aye, Munson – aye, Hume – aye, Neff***
253 ***Ragsdale – aye, Broadwater – aye and Myette - aye.***

254 The meeting was adjourned at 9:23 PM.

255 Respectfully submitted,

256

257 Nancy Hoijer,
258 Recording Secretary
259 Remotely