

**Town of Chester
Conservation Commission
September 8, 2020
7:00 PM
Virtual Meeting
Approved Minutes**

**Zoom I.D. #98130617570
Phone: (929) 436-2866**

Present (Remotely):

Chairman Victor Chouinard
Deb Munson
Kristina Snyder
Kathleen Neff Ragsdale
Ted Broadwater
Rick Sibley

Absent:

Aaron Hume, Alternate
Selectman Chuck Myette, Liaison

Guests:

Shawn Dufresne
Bill & Debra Hesketh
CCTV

I. Call to Order

Chair Chouinard called the meeting to order at 7:07 PM.

II. New Business

1. Lincoln Lane (Victor)

Chair Chouinard indicated the Commission's role is a monitoring role. The Commission can subcontract it out or do it ourselves on a regular basis at a minimum every two years. It should be done once per year. Chair Chouinard indicated the Commission is responsible to monitor and the Town has an obligation.

Chair Chouinard reported he, Rick and Aaron went out to the Lincoln Lane easement and talked about the bridge land and the account that earns .12 cents per month in interest and what we are going to do with it.

Chair Chouinard noted he didn't know where, or how you would build a bridge and doesn't know where "replacement of a bridge" came from or whether there is a formal trust document. Chair Chouinard reached out to legal who indicated the Commission could mutually agree with the Home Owners' Association what to do with that money.

Chair Chouinard noted the residents expressed concerns about access, parking and signage. Legal indicated the builder had been responsible to put signs up. Access is a steep slope. Cutting a trail could do more harm. The Class VI road seems to provide better access.

Chair Chouinard indicated the easement was done in good faith and can't be adjusted. The 50' buffer is to provide protection especially in high density housing areas. The Commission can't detract from the original intent of the easement and the Commission does not have enforcement authority. Half-acre lots are being turned into two-acre lots. Chair Chouinard gave as an example, the Gladys Nichols Natural Area and noted you can't let someone expand their driveway into it.

Chair Chouinard indicated the homeowners need to make sure the lot lines are clearly delineated, and the Commission can go out with a metal detector and search for the pins. Otherwise a surveyor would have to be hired and many are busy, and it is an expense. Chair Chouinard wrote to Eric Mitchell, the surveyor who took over the plans after Abdallah Construction, and has had no response.

Chair Chouinard asked if residents all had a copy of the easement? – no. Chair Chouinard indicated he can send an electronic copy.

Ms. Neff Ragsdale asked if the deeds stipulated about the easement and Chair Chouinard indicated at least one deed mentioned it.

Shawn Dufresne asked about violations and what action can be taken? There are septic systems and decks in Conservation land. Chair Chouinard indicated it may be a question for the Code Enforcement Officer. Mr. Dufresne noted FEMA has his property in a flood zone and the Town does not.

Mr. and Mrs. Hesketh asked the next step for the \$3,000 put aside for the bridge? Chair Chouinard noted if the Commission can determine there is no surveying needed, they can enter into discussions with the homeowners to see what you would like to do with it.

Mr. Hesketh asked if the shed is on the Conservation lot line and the previous Building Inspector said it was okay, doesn't that have a setback? Chair Chouinard noted that was a call for the Building Inspector to make. There is no rear setback shown on the plans.

2. Annual Budget (Victor, Kathie)

Chair Chouinard noted Town Administrator Doda reminded when sending out the budget worksheets that we are in financially hard times and urged departments to hold the line or reduce.

Ms. Neff Ragsdale noted last year's budget was \$1,200 after overspending the previous year's which was \$954. Chair Chouinard indicated after speaking with legal he was reassured that Conservation funds can be used for promotion of Conservation activities. The budget could be held at the current level for seminars and dues. Ms. Munson agreed she was in favor of keeping the budget flat and using other accounts to pay for special things.

Ms. Munson motioned to keep the budget at \$1,200. Mr. Broadwater seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Munson – aye, Broadwater – aye, Neff Ragsdale – aye, Sibley – aye, Chouinard – aye and Snyder – aye. With all in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

III. Old Business

1. Review Minutes

Ms. Neff Ragsdale motioned to accept the August 11, 2020 minutes. Ms. Snyder seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Munson – aye, Broadwater – aye, Neff Ragsdale – aye, Sibley – aye, Chouinard – aye and Snyder – aye. With all in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

2. Subcommittee Reports

A. Strategic Land Protection Committee – SLPC (Non-Public – 91-A:3(II)(d))

Chair Chouinard motioned to go into non-public session pursuant to 91-A:3(II)(d) consideration of the acquisition of real estate. Ms. Neff Ragsdale seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Munson – aye, Broadwater – aye, Neff Ragsdale – aye, Sibley – aye, Chouinard – aye and Snyder – aye. With all in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Neff Ragsdale motioned to come out of non-public session at 9:17 PM. Ms. Munson seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Chouinard – aye, Snyder – aye, Broadwater – aye, Munson – aye, Neff Ragsdale – aye and Sibley – aye. With all in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was reopened at 9:17 PM.

Ms. Neff Ragsdale motioned to seal the minutes of the non-public session permanently. Ms. Munson seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Chouinard – aye, Snyder – aye, Broadwater – aye, Munson – aye, Neff

Ragsdale – aye, and Sibley – aye. With all in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

B. Treasurer's Report (Kathie)

Ms. Neff Ragsdale reported:

\$ 344,079.31 beginning balance Conservation Commission account
- 49,834.76 Goldsmith purchase
+ 113,150.83 "Credit"
+ (14,250.00 Current Use)
+ (415.83 General Fund)
+ 62.99 Interest

\$ 408,195.38

Chair Chouinard will take a closer look at these.

\$ 41,194.52 Forestry beginning balance
+ 6.97 interest

\$ 41,201.49 ending balance

\$ 3,088.93 Lincoln Lane beginning balance
+ .53 Interest

\$ 3,089.46 ending balance

\$ 10,217.09 Emerson beginning balance
+ 1.73 Interest

\$ 10,218.82 ending balance

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

C. Spring Hill Farm (Kristina)

Ms. Snyder reported the Ortins are renewing the lease of the high tunnel and have opened their farm stand with lots of produce, squash, pumpkins, corn which is available on the honor system, although a camera is watching. The food truck may be opening shortly.

Ms. Snyder reported Emily Kunelius resigned as chair and Beth Sautter has stepped up to be Chair. Corinna Reishus will be the treasurer.

185
186 Ms. Snyder reported some of the buildings need repairs and will prioritize and
187 discuss the budget at their next meeting.
188

189 D. Wason Pond Conservation & Recreation Commission (Kathie, Kristina)
190

191 i. Culvert Project & Fishing Line Receptacle (Victor, Kristina)
192

193 Ms. Snyder noted no real beaver activity, a couple of branches here and
194 there. Chair Chouinard indicated he would like to bring in a backhoe to
195 remove a few boulders to get the pipe in flat.
196

197 Ms. Snyder reported a letter was sent out to local groups who would be
198 willing to work with Fish & Game and us on the fishing line receptacles
199 before the Kid's Derby.
200

201 Ms. Snyder noted one of the porta potties has reopened. The playground
202 remains closed.
203

204 Ms. Snyder noted a new member to the Commission, Mr. Webster, who
205 will be helping with their Facebook page.
206

207 Chair Chouinard noted the illegal bridge made of picnic tables and other
208 debris keeps returning and may need to remove the materials further
209 away. Ms. Munson asked if it made sense to put in a legal bridge
210 crossing? Ms. Snyder indicated it is a difficult spot to do a bridge and
211 budget wise, the pavilion is a big item this year.
212

213 E. Easements, Monitoring and Stewardship
214

215 i. Declaration of Conservation Easements (Victor)
216

217 Chair Chouinard indicated he spoke with legal concerning the lack of
218 availability of organizations like RCCD who are willing to take on any new
219 easements and proposed doing them ourselves. Legal sent a proposed
220 Declaration of Conservation Easements with standard terminology. This
221 could be put on next year's Town Meeting so that Conservation could
222 accept easements from itself.
223

224 Ms. Munson recommended checking with the NH Association of
225 Conservation Commissions to see what other towns are doing, or the
226 Forest Society. Ms. Munson will contact NHACC. Chair Chouinard will
227 send her exactly what our question is.
228
229
230

231 ii. Aaron's progress (Victor)

232
233 Chair Chouinard indicated Mr. Hume is assembling the documents and
234 has done a lot of work.

235
236 F. Trails

237
238 Mr. Broadwater indicated he has prepared a form letter to send out to
239 homeowners to get permission to include their properties on the maps for
240 posting.

241
242 **IV. Plan Reviews**

243
244 None

245
246 **V. Miscellaneous Business**

247
248 1. Seeding (Victor)

249
250 Chair Chouinard indicated he received pictures and specifications from Eversource
251 about the seed mix they would like to use over the gravel to get that to grow in.

252
253 2. Contest (Kristina)

254
255 Ms. Snyder would like to launch a new photo contest and get the community engaged:
256 wildlife, birds, animals or nature pictures. Ms. Snyder is hoping to reach out to local
257 business for donations. Ms. Munson recommended pollinator themes and anything to
258 do with fall. Chair Chouinard recommended a contest to find the largest trees, by
259 species in Chester. Mr. Sibley recommended a pumpkin photo contest. Ms. Snyder
260 would like the entry to include a narrative about what the photographer liked about the
261 animal, habitat, how it is helpful to the ecosystem and a kid's category which could be
262 mammals, fish, birds or insects.

263
264 3. Invasives Presentation

265
266 Ms. Snyder shared an email about Autumn Olive on Emerson Road. Ms. Munson
267 questioned whether the Extension would give a talk on invasives. The Co-op is holding
268 Zoom educational sessions but is unsure if there are recorded ones. There could be a
269 link on Front Porch Chatter to the Conservation page to talk about invasives.

270
271
272 Respectfully submitted,

273
274 Nancy Hoijer,
275 Recording Secretary