

**Town of Chester
Conservation Commission
February 9, 2021
7:00 PM
Approved Minutes**

Members present (Remotely):

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

Guests present:

Eagle Scout Candidate Alex Brillhart
Jay Rowden
Town Administrator Debra Doda

I. Call to Order

Chair Chouinard called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

II. New Business

1. Alex Brillhart – Eagle Scout project at Wason Pond

Mr. Brillhart presented his Eagle Scout project proposal, which will earn his Eagle Scout rank while also improving the community. The current bog bridge is rotting and is no longer suitable for foot traffic. He plans to build a 4' x 150' modified Type 3 puncheon bridge to replace the current bridge. The width could be reduced to 2' if necessary, which will allow room for emergency vehicles and horses to travel to the side of it. He will need to either trim or remove a small amount of brush and a pine sapling, if given permission. He will raise funds for the materials, and use volunteer labor to help him construct and install the bridge. It will be constructed offsite and assembled onsite. Installation will occur in June. The cost of the materials is estimated at approximately \$5,000.

There was curbing on the bridge in the original plan, but Selectman Myette explained that the Wason Pond Conservation and Recreation Commission requested that it be omitted to

remove a trip hazard. He asked if the curbing was required to be ADA compliant.

Chair Chouinard is concerned that a width of less than 4' will be too narrow, not allowing people to pass safely. Having the bridge will be less of an environmental impact than removing the brush and trees, but he will need to get approval from the Rockingham County Conservation District (RCCD) to do so, as they hold the easement.

Selectman Myette suggested widening the trail to 10' so emergency vehicles can easily use it. Mr. Brillhart said the Fire Department measured the trail and said 9' is enough for the vehicle they would use, as long as the tree and brush were removed.

Chair Chouinard asked if there would be an issue with the bridge being damaged as a result of freezing, and Mr. Brillhart explained this is why there are gaps between the decking boards, so water can flow in and under it. If it freezes and causes a failure, it is easy to replace the boards. Chair Chouinard recommended opening the holes the J bolts are run through to allow the boards to slide.

Chair Chouinard will contact the RCCD, as well as ask if they can widen the trail to 10' through normal trail maintenance.

The commission complimented Mr. Brillhart on his presentation, and will contact him after speaking with the RCCD.

III. Old Business

1. Review minutes – January 12, 2021

Chair Chouinard said on page 4, he clarified that Rockingham rates should read Rockingham County Conservation District rates. Ms. Snyder said on line 200, it should read that the easement was originally drafted in the mid '80s.

Ms. Neff Ragsdale moved to accept the minutes as amended. Mr. Sibley seconded. By roll call, agree to accept minutes as amended by discussion and approve them. Chouinard – aye, Snyder – aye, Munson – aye, Sibley – aye, Ragsdale – aye, Myette – aye, Hume – aye, Broadwater - abstained. The motion passed 7-0-1.

2. Subcommittee Reports

a. Treasurer's Report – Ms. Neff Ragsdale

Regular account:

\$ 1,200.00	starting balance
0.00	expenditures
\$ 919.99	ending balance (used roughly 23.33% of budget)

Savings account (includes jumbo CD):

\$ 448,797.82 Starting balance
\$ 150.00 debit (perhaps for virtual online program)
\$ 57.14 interest
\$ 448,704.96 Ending balance

Forestry account:

\$ 41,227.56 starting balance
5.25 interest
\$ 41,232.81 ending balance

Lincoln Lane account

\$ 3,091.41 starting balance
0.40 interest
\$ 3,091.81 ending balance

Emerson Conservation Easement:

\$ 10,225.29 starting balance
1.30 interest
\$ 10,226.59 ending balance

She received notice that they took in \$57,000 in current use for December. She does not see it reflected, so it most likely is coming in next month's financials.

Ms. Snyder moved to approve the Treasurer's Report. Mr. Hume seconded. By roll call, agree to accept Treasurer's Report as stated. Chouinard – aye, Snyder – aye, Munson – aye, Sibley – aye, Ragsdale – aye, Myette – aye, Hume – aye, Ted Broadwater – aye. With all in favor, the motion passed 8-0-0.

b. Springhill Farm Advisory Committee

Ms. Snyder reported the Trust is moving forward with the application to apply for a 1:1 match for \$20,000 for restoration of the barn. The repair will include foundation work, stone and sill repair. The grant is through the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance, 1772 grant, and is due on February 12th. Selectman Myette said the grant is being submitted tomorrow. They have a

proposal from a timber framer to do the work, JR Grotan of Northfield, which will take about two months.

Ms. Snyder said the lease for the high tunnel is signed for another year, December through December, by the same couple that is currently there, Christy and Nick Ortins from Geary Farms.

Ms. Snyder reported that Gerald (Buddy) Menard and Alex Bartels made a presentation requesting permission to graze cows on the farm. Their short-term goal is to raise cattle. Their long-term goal is to sell processed or live animals, and provide an opportunity to educate the public. They will move the animals between the farm property and other properties they already own. The number of cows will be between 10-20. The Committee members discussed having cows on the property versus haying, and striking a balance. The selectmen need the farm to be productive. This conversation will continue at their next meeting, and they will probably vote at that point.

There was a suggestion to hold a winter carnival, but the Chester Recreation Commission decided against it due to the current state of emergency. There might be an event in March instead, tying it into Leprechaun Day at the farm, depending on the COVID situation.

There are openings on the Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee. Ms. Snyder said she would like to end her role as Conservation Commission liaison, and believes there might be another member who would be a better fit. She suggested members attend a meeting as a member of the public before committing. Selectman Myette thanked Ms. Snyder for the work she has done for the Conservation Committee and for the Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee.

c. Wason Pond Conservation Area

Ms. Snyder reported that Mr. Brillhart presented his Eagle Scout project. Chair Hadik will be adding "No Hunting – No Discharging of Firearms" stickers to the main rules signs. Ms. Snyder received approval to erect a sign by the beaver lodge. She reported that the board of the Chester Rod & Gun Club voted unanimously to fund the fishing line receptacle project. It will be brought to their membership for approval on February 15th. They hope to have them installed by the end of March. The Fish and Game Department will promote the receptacles on their social media and will put a writeup in the *Hawkeye News*.

d. Easements, Monitoring, and Stewardship

Chair Chouinard received notification from the RCCD that they are taking care of Wason Pond and Herrick Woods. Selectman Myette asked about the two farmland easements the RCCD usually does, so they can be submitted to the federal program. Chair Chouinard said he believes they might have done the Wilson property last year, and Root Farm/Scotts. Selectman Myette said the Commission might want to have them consistently do the two farmland easements, and Chair Chouinard agreed.

Mr. Hume asked if there was ever an intention to give the Hatton parcel to the RCCD. Selectman Myette said there were a number of easements they intended to have the RCCD monitor, but they are no longer accepting easements. Selectman Myette suggested checking to see if there is an easement on the deed. Chair Chouinard said the Commission decided to hold their own easements and it is in their best interest to put an easement on it. If there is no conservation wording in the deed itself, they probably should move forward on these easements. Selectman Myette suggested that Mr. Hume note the easements without conservation wording in them, so they can be taken care of in the future.

Mr. Hume said Cornerstone Surveys produced a tax map that combines all three parcels into one. He is trying to find out if it was recorded. He can finish the survey since the house is not on a conservation easement. He found no mention of a stone wall.

Chair Chouinard said he received a note from Town Planner Andrew Hadik saying the Jenkins open space deed was successfully filed. He also said he will get the green rebar caps to the Lincoln Lane residents as soon as spring arrives. He put together a proposal as to what to do with the bridge money, but has had no response yet.

IV. Miscellaneous Business

1. Presentations

Ms. Snyder said the Squam Lakes Natural Science Center held their "Animals in Winter" presentation last Saturday, which was very successful. She believes there will be another dandelion photo contest, which was popular last year. Ms. Munson said there is a presentation on February 16th by Vicky Brown regarding pollinator pathways via Zoom. Selectman Myette suggested that the presentations be better promoted. Ms. Snyder said half the people that sign up actually attend. She listed the ways and places it was promoted, and said maybe Saturday evening is a bad time for a presentation.

218 Selectman Myette said the work Ms. Snyder has done with the presentations has helped
220 the Conservation Commission, and thanked the members for the work they all have done
that has improved the awareness and outreach of the Commission's work.

222 **V. Strategic Land Protection Committee - SLPC**

224 Chair Chouinard suggested moving into non-public session per RSA 91-A3 II (d).

226 *Mr. Hume moved to enter into non-public session on lands acquisition. Mr.*
Broadwater seconded. By roll call, Chouinard – aye, Snyder – aye, Munson – aye,
228 *Sibley – aye, Ragsdale – aye, Myette – aye, Hume – aye, Broadwater - aye. The motion*
passed 8-0-0.

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232 The recording was turned off at 7:58 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
234 *Beth Haggeli*
Recording Secretary

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