

**Town of Chester
Conservation Commission
August 10, 2021
7:00 PM
Approved Minutes**

Members present:

Chairman Victor Chouinard
Kristina Snyder
Deb Munson
Aaron Hume, Alternate
Selectman Chuck Myette, Liaison

Members absent:

Rick Sibley
Ted Broadwater
Kathleen Neff Ragsdale

Guests present:

Steve D'Angelo
Chester PACT

I. Call to Order

Chair Chouinard called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

II. New Business

A. Community Conservation Cohort

Ms. Munson completed an application to request help planning a wildlife-related activity. The Commission will be notified next week if the application was successful. Only five or six community groups can be accommodated and there were many more applications submitted.

Selectman Myette noted that participating in this program requires significant training to examine wildlife and wildlife interactions within the community and come up with a program. It has been difficult in the past to get participation but there is more awareness now. He suggested consulting Amanda Stone for assistance in moving toward getting a cohort program established.

B. Lincoln Lane Fund

Chairman Chouinard and the Lincoln Lane residents attended the recent Board of Selectmen's meeting. The Board of Selectmen requested a letter signed by the residents stating that they understand what is occurring and are all in agreement with it. Chairman

Chouinard provided the residents with a summary of what has happened to bring the situation to its current state. The residents asked to be on the agenda for the next Board of Selectmen's meeting. Chairman Chouinard has not seen a copy of the letter.

C. Wason Pond Bridge

Chairman Chouinard reported that the Wason Pond Recreation and Conservation Commission (WPC) recommended to the Board of Selectmen that the Town erect a temporary wooden bridge over the existing structure that could support pedestrians and the Fire and Police Department Gators. Selectman Myette has a design that has been used at other places on the Wason property that would work and has created a materials list.

The report from the Town engineer states that he cannot recommend the current structure be used for any amount of weight. A State representative is inspecting the bridge tomorrow morning. There is a concern about a beaver dam blocking Rt. 102, although that has never been an issue; the issue with the dam was always upstream.

Building Inspector Myrick will allow a temporary structure to be built. The estimated cost to build it is \$2,500. This option is cost-effective and will allow lightweight emergency vehicles access as well as permitting the public to cross it. A permanent structure that is more wildlife-friendly and with more capacity is needed. The materials used to construct the temporary bridge can be reused in other places in the future. The goal is to replace the temporary bridge with a permanent structure by next year.

Selectman Myette said this is an opportunity to find where other funds might be available. Hopefully they can get a grant for the entire amount to build a permanent structure. The temporary bridge could last 20 years, if necessary. At the next meeting, the Commission will discuss funding upfront the engineering work to know what they're dealing with. Selectman Myette said the attorneys and the finance department have said that Conservation Commission funds can be used for this purpose. Volunteers will be solicited to build it. It will also need to be handicapped accessible.

Ms. Snyder moved to approve the expenditure of up to \$3,200 from the general Conservation Commission funds to help fund the temporary Wason Pond Bridge project over the footbridge. Mr. Hume seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

D. Sandown Conservation Commission

Brian Butler from the Sandown Conservation Commission (SCC) contacted Chairman Chouinard and recommended collaboration between adjacent conservation commissions. He requested that the Commission invite the SCC to the next meeting, as well as those from Raymond and Danville. Selectman Myette said in the past they have done this and it was informative. The Commission was in favor of this.

88 The Commission discussed the difficulty of finding someone to take easements on
Town-owned land. It is also difficult to enforce those easements, but they are needed to
90 protect the land. Chairman Chouinard explained that the SCC had impact fees paid by a
developer to the state diverted to the Southeast Land Trust (SELT) to pay them to take
92 the easement. It would be helpful to understand more about this.

94 The Commission discussed meeting twice a month, one business meeting and one for
general discussions. However, they decided to keep the schedule as it currently stands. A
96 special meeting can be called if/when necessary.

98 Chairman Chouinard will reach out to Mr. Butler and invite the SCC to the next
meeting.

100 **E. Class VI Roads**

102 Chairman Chouinard reported that Selectman D'Angelo has proposed converting Class
VI roads into trails. Selectman Myette pointed out that there isn't much difference
104 between the two, as each is a public way. Mr. Hume said that there are people who live
on Class VI roads. Selectman D'Angelo said the intent is to look at some of the Class VI
106 roads, not all of them. Selectman Myette suggested examining the state RSAs for
clarification.

108 This discussion was tabled and will be continued at the next meeting.

110 **III. Old Business**

112 **A. Review Minutes – July**

114 Mr. Hume said on line 300, it should be an **AxisGIS** map.

*Ms. Munson moved to approved the minutes from the July 13, 2021 meeting as
116 amended. Mr. Hume seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The
motion passed unanimously.*

118 **B. Subcommittee reports**

120 **1. Strategic Land Protection Committee - SLPC**

This topic will be discussed in a non-public session following all regular business.

122 **2. Treasurer's Report**

124 Savings account:

\$ 468,743.09 starting balance

126 38.52 interest

\$ 468,781.61 Ending balance

128 Forestry account:

130 \$ 41,253.55 starting balance
 3.39 interest
132 \$ 41,256.94 ending balance

134 Lincoln Lane account:
 \$ 3,093.36 starting balance
136 0.26 interest
 \$ 3,093.62 ending balance

138 Emerson Conservation Easement:
140 \$ 10,231.73 starting balance
 0.84 interest
142 \$ 10,232.57 ending balance

144 Regular account:
 \$ 1,200.00 starting balance
146 155.00 expenditures under dues and subscriptions
 \$ 1,045.00 ending balance

148 ***Ms. Snyder moved to approve the Treasurer's Report as stated. Ms. Munson***
150 ***seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion passed***
152 ***unanimously.***

152 **3. Spring Hill Farm**

154 Ms. Snyder and Chairman Chouinard met with Alina Harris and her colleagues from
 the Xerces Society of the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service. Ms. Harris
156 toured the property and gave suggestions as to how to protect the pollinator area and
 accommodate the use of the farm by the public via trails. She noted that it is difficult
158 to grow pollinator plants in that area and gave ideas how to do so successfully.

 The Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee (SHFAC) Committee is trying to find
160 funding to pay for the work on the barn and the farmhouse. They hope to have the
 farmhouse open and in use soon.

162 The Ortins' crops have suffered from the drought and the rain, but some have
 thrived. The farm stand is open and is doing well.

164 All fields around the farmhouse have been hayed. So far, 651 bales have been put
 up. They should be able to get a second cut on those fields with three straight days of
166 dry weather. There hasn't been enough dry weather to cut the fields on Lane Road.

 Selectman Myette still hasn't heard from the AARP regarding the grant application.
168 Eversource issued a \$2,500 grant to help with the ADA work.

 The Fall Festival will be on September 25th.

170 The Derry Trail Riders are holding a horse trail ride on the property on September
26th. There could be 50 riders on Lane Road.

172 The SHFAC will have a booth at the Town Fair.

174 Selectman Myette reported that Dick Lewis approached the SHFAC regarding a
logging job on the Patenaude property and asked for permission to utilize the old
176 logging landing off Lane Road. They need to inform the Rockingham County
Conservation District that they will be using the existing landing. Ms. Snyder
expressed concern as to how the activity would impact wildlife and pollinators.

178 Selectman Myette discussed the possibility of doing a logging project on the Spring
Hill Farm property. Timber is needed for building projects. Pine is preferred for
180 construction. It would need to be done during the winter, when the sap is low. A
selective cut could be done, especially of problematic species. The value of the land
182 is in timber and haying. Ms. Snyder would like notification before any logging
project begins to be able to examine the area.

184 *Ms. Munson moved to vote on approving the use of the existing landing on the*
Spring Hill Farm property for access to the adjacent Patenaude property for their
186 *benefit. Mr. Hume seconded. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion*
passed unanimously.

188 Chairman Chouinard asked about the status of hemlocks. Selectman Myette reported
190 that most of the hemlocks on the property are infested with woody adelgid. A timber
cruise was done three years ago; that report could be consulted. They are not in a
192 position to commit to any logging activity at this point.

194 Chairman Chouinard contacted the RCCD to notify them that invasive plants have
been removed and they are enthusiastic about this. They are supportive of activity to
196 increase pollinators. They approved having a bonfire, as long as no manmade
materials are burned.

198 Selectman Myette reported that the 300th Celebration Anniversary Committee plans
200 to hold a bonfire on New Year's Night. They have approached the SHFAC to discuss
combining this activity with a winter festival instead on the property, possibly in
202 February.

204 Chairman Chouinard would like to coordinate with the transfer station to dispose of
the manmade debris that has been deposited on the farm. Ms. Snyder proposed a fall
206 clean-up day.

208 **4. Wason Pond Conservation area**

Ms. Snyder reported that summer camp ended last week. It was well-attended, with
210 50+ campers.

The Boy Scout project is moving forward. Mr. Brillhart will begin installation on August 15th and hopes to be done by mid-September. He is still obtaining donations to fund the project.

Ms. Munson, Ms. Neff Ragsdale and Ms. Snyder examined the area where the town planted over 1,000 pollinator plants in the past. The Town Maintenance Department mowed most of the milkweed plants, due to a miscommunication. They met with John Dalrymple and he will ensure there will be better communication in the future. A sign will be posted to draw attention to the pollinator area and protect it.

The WPC voted for Wason Pond to have an ordinance that dogs must be on leash. Ranger Wright sees issues all the time, as people either ignore or disobey the existing leash rule. The area is being heavily used. Mr. Hadik spoke with the Board of Selectmen and they agreed that an ordinance is needed. A suggestion was made to create a dog park, which will most likely be discussed at the next WPC meeting.

A Fireman's Muster will be held. The WPC discussed where the poles would be erected and how long they will be in place. They are concerned about the impact on the fields and any safety issues due to the poles attracting troublesome behavior.

Selectman Myette reported that the issue with the ADA ramp was with the landing area from the ramp to the parking lot, not with the ramp itself. The ramp is compliant and they are ready to move forward with construction. Building Inspector Bunker has approved the project. Town Administrator Debra Doda will move the process forward.

5. Easements, Monitoring and Stewardship

a. Loranger property

Mr. Hume sent the Commission members a link to an interactive map to show them the work he has done. There are reports that haven't been filed. Selectman D'Angelo volunteered to make copies of those reports so they can be filed. Selectman Myette will speak with Mr. Hadik to find out if the Emerson property easement has been filed.

There is potential encroachment on the eastern and western borders of the Loranger property. The boundaries need to be staked. Chairman Chouinard believes they need an easement on this property. Mr. Hume will get an estimate from the Town engineer for a price and his availability to do a survey. Chairman Chouinard said the property will be called the Loranger parcel easement.

IV. Plan Reviews

There are no plan reviews.

V. Miscellaneous Business

A. Presentations

Ms. Snyder said more wildlife presentations are needed. It is hard to plan them due to COVID. The winners of the dandelion photo contest are displayed in Town Hall.

The monarch and milkweed presentation originally scheduled for August 28th has been moved to October 16th. The presenter will give attendees seeds to plant in the fall. The MPR will be reserved in case more than 21 people attend, due to social distancing requirements. Ms. Munson noted the acoustics are difficult in the MPR.

Town Fair will be held on September 11th. The Commission will man a table and Ms. Neff Ragsdale and Mr. Sibley will help. Materials that could be displayed include a map of all Conservation properties, trail maps, leaflets about the benefits of putting your land in conservation. There could be a questionnaire or a short survey asking residents what is important to them regarding conservation. Chairman Chouinard would like a one-page summary of what the Commission has done, as residents may not understand the scope of what conservation involves. There could be a raffle for those who fill out the survey.

Andy Timmins from New Hampshire Fish & Game might have a table at the Town Fair next to Commission's table. He could provide information on how to coexist with wildlife and how to protecting livestock and crops from predators, as well as how to deal with nuisance wildlife.

Ms. Snyder will attend the next Town Fair meeting to discuss possible alternatives to handing out balloons, as they are dangerous to wildlife.

VI. Non-public session

Ms. Munson moved that the Commission enter into a non-public session per RSA 91-A:3, II(d), Consideration of the acquisition, sale or lease of real or personal property which, if discussed in public, would likely benefit a party or parties whose interests are adverse to those of the general community. Ms. Snyder seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

The camera was turned off at 8:59 PM.

*Respectfully submitted,
Beth Hanggeli, Recording Secretary*