

**Town of Chester
Conservation Commission
October 12, 2021
7:00 PM
Approved Minutes**

Members present:

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

Members absent:

Aaron Hume, Alternate

Guests present:

Nick Tranquillo
Chester PACT

I. Call to Order

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

II. New Business

A. Emery Purchase and Sales Agreement

Chairman Chouinard read the description of the transaction to purchase a parcel of land (Tax Map 4, Lot 69) from Lloyd R. Emmery, Jr., for conservation purposes. The parcel abuts other Conservation-owned land. It is approximately 7.16 acres and has been timbered. The Commission is pleased with this purchase. It was surveyed approximately 30 years ago. It will be maintained as open space.

Mr. Broadwater moved that the Commission approve this Purchase and Sales Agreement and bring it to the Board of Selectmen. Ms. Neff Ragsdale seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor except Selectman Myette, who abstained. The motion passed.

Chairman Chouinard will present this Purchase and Sales Agreement to the Board of Selectmen at their next meeting.

B. Lincoln Lane Fund

Chairman Chouinard reported that this project has been approved by the Board of Selectmen, who requested that Lincoln Lane residents submit expenses to the Conservation Commission to be processed.

48 *Ms. Neff Ragsdale moved that \$627.34 be distributed from the Lincoln Lane fund to*
50 *William Hesketh as reimbursement for the first round of materials for the cul de sac*
52 *project. Mr. Broadwater seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor*
except Selectman Myette, who abstained. The motion passed.

52 **C. Wason Pond Bridge**

54 Chairman Chouinard reported that at the last meeting, the Commission decided a
56 subcommittee should be convened to focus on moving this project forward. Ms. Snyder
58 has taken the lead, Chairman Chouinard and Ms. Munson have volunteered to participate,
60 as have Selectman Couture and Recreation Director Corinna Reishus. The first meeting
62 will be held on October 29th in the Rec Office. It is in the best interests of the Town to
finalize plans for a permanent structure. Selectman Myette suggested that the Fire
Department and Town Administrator Debra Doda also be involved, as they might have
information on funds available from DES and FEMA.

62 **D. Sandown Conservation Commission**

64 Ms. Munson reported on the recent meeting with local conservation commissions
66 sponsored by the Sandown Conservation Commission. Sandown retains a wetlands
68 scientist who reviews plans when submitted and verifies that developers are adhering to
the requirements. They discussed encroachments and how the Towns deal with them.

70 Chairman Chouinard reported they discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the various
72 Commissions. Trails are one of the main ways the public learns about conservation. The
Derry and Sandown commissions have a great deal of responsibility in dealing with
74 developers. In Chester, this is handled by the Planning Board. Other towns prefer not to
deal with easements.

76 The commissions plan to meet again in a couple of months.

76 **E. Class VI Roads**

78 Selectman Myette said this is a topic of interest for the Town and the Board of Selectmen
80 as to how they can protect these roads. There is pressure by developers to open Class VI
82 roads. Currently, the Town manages Class VI roads and controls access via gates. It is
important to understand the regulations and the significance of changing Class VI roads
84 into Class VII roads or trails, as the Town would lose control of these roads. The Board
of Selectmen are consulting attorney Steve Buckley to better understand this issue,
including obligations and liability. Chairman Chouinard will continue to pursue this
topic.

86 **F. ZBA Meeting 9/21/21**

88 The Commission recently agreed to take a stand on wetback variances to support the
90 Town rule of a 75' setback. Chairman Chouinard presented this to the ZBA at their last
meeting. Variances were granted by the ZBA.

92 **G. Spring Hill Farm Logging Landing**

Mr. Dick Lewis would like to use the existing landing for a logging project. Chairman Chouinard requested clearance from the Rockingham County Conservation District (RCCD), who asked for an up-to-date data check to see if there are threatened species or plants in the area. The report came back negative and Mr. Lewis has been given approval to use the landing.

There is an open well on the property that needs to be capped or covered to prevent wildlife or people from falling into it. Chairman Chouinard volunteered to take care of it.

III. Regular Business

A. Review Minutes – September

Mr. Broadwater moved to approve the minutes from the September 14, 2021 meeting as written. Ms. Munson seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Subcommittee reports

1. Strategic Land Protection Committee – SLPC

There is nothing new to report.

2. Treasurer's Report

Savings account:

\$ 510,182.73	starting balance
43.33	interest
\$ 510,226.06	ending balance

Conservation Forestry account:

\$ 41,260.44	starting balance
3.51	interest
\$ 41,263.95	ending balance

Lincoln Lane account:

\$ 3,093.88	starting balance
0.26	interest
\$ 3,094.14	ending balance

Emerson Conservation Easement:

\$ 10,233.44	starting balance
0.87	interest
\$ 10,234.31	ending balance

Regular account:

\$ 990.00	starting balance
00.00	expenditures
\$ 990.00	ending balance (82.5% of budget)

Mr. Sibley asked if there was another method of investing these funds to earn more of a return. Selectman Myette will research this.

Ms. Snyder moved to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented. Mr. Broadwater seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Spring Hill Farm

Ms. Snyder reported that \$345 was raised at the Town Fair. They have cut 986 bales of hay, 493 of which have gone to the cattlemen, 323 bales were sold at \$6/bale out of the barn and \$5/bale off the field. The Fall Fest went well. Selectmen Myette reported that money was raised for the farmhouse ADA ramp. They received two donations that totaled \$1500. There were good agricultural discussions, particularly with the vendor selling microgreens, regarding use of the land and the High Tunnel year round.

Mr. Mark Desiderio was voted in as a new member. They discussed sledding on the back hill (Spring Hill) behind the farmhouse, which has been taken over by invasive plants that need to be removed.

4. Wason Pond Conservation area

Ms. Munson reported that Ms. Corinna Reishus has stepped down from the WPC, as she is no longer a resident of Chester. Ms. Kathy Dircks will be replacing Ms. Reishus on the Commission. Ms. Snyder said there will be a scavenger hunt again this fall, as last year's was very successful.

Selectman Myette reported on the public hearing regarding a leash law being imposed at Wason Pond. The Board of Selectmen agreed that leashes could be no longer than eight feet and dogs must be leashed while on the property. Fines can be imposed of up to \$1,000 for non-compliance.

The Town attorney has written the leash law, which will be reviewed by the WPC. The Board of Selectmen will then vote on it; it does not have to go to the Town for a warrant article. The police and the Ranger can write citations. It will most likely go into effect in November. There will need to be signs posted to increase public awareness.

Ms. Snyder said people are being told to take their dogs to Spring Hill Farm to avoid the leash requirement. She is concerned about the sensitive habitats on the farm and dogs chasing wildlife. The Town has a voice control law but no leash requirement.

Ms. Munson asked if there is an official communication channel in town. The Town website is intended to be the formal means of communication about events in Town. It might need to be enhanced to provide more information. Selectman Myette will discuss this with Town Administrator Doda.

Chairman Chouinard reported that five yards of fine gravel mix has been spread at the bridge.

Mr. Broadwater reported the Chester Charitable Foundation is gearing up to put on Pounder X. After that event, they will be cleaning out the barn of the obstacles, etc.; some items will be donated.

5. Easements, Monitoring, and Stewardship

Mr. Hume was not present at the meeting, but he had nothing to report.

IV. Plan Reviews

There are no plan reviews.

V. Miscellaneous Business

A. Presentations

Ms. Snyder reported there is a program on Saturday at 11:00 AM in the Main Meeting Room of the Town Offices, "Petals in the Pines," on pollinators. Chester PACT has been invited to record the presentation. It is being advertised on social media as well.

B. Potential Member

Mr. Nick Tranquilo described why he is interested in becoming a member of the Conservation Commission. He moved to Chester from Salem last year and would like to help preserve the rural character of Chester. He has expertise in areas that might be useful to the Commission, including real estate and legal. The Commission members introduced themselves and described their interests. Selectmen Myette reviewed the history of the Commission. Chairman Chouinard recommended that Mr. Tranquilo attend a few meetings before becoming a member.

VI. Adjourn

Ms. Snyder moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 PM. Mr. Broadwater seconded the motion. A vote was taken and all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

*Respectfully submitted,
Beth Hanggeli, Recording Secretary*