

**Town of Chester
Conservation Commission
December 14, 2021
7:00 PM
Approved Minutes**

Members present:

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

Member absent:

Ted Broadwater

Guests present:

Nick Tranquillo
Chester PACT

I. Call to Order

Chair Chouinard called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

II. New Business

A. Emery Purchase Update and thank you card

Chairman Chouinard reported that the Emery purchase was completed the first of November. A thank-you card for Mr. Emery was signed by the Conservation Commission members and will be sent to him.

B. Lincoln Lane Fund Reimbursements

Chairman Chouinard reported on November 21, Town Administrator Doda and Selectman Myette approved an email vote, as there was no meeting in November. The Commission voted to reimburse the Lincoln Lane residents \$1,966.62. The vote was unanimous 6-0. Chairman Chouinard reported the project looks very nice.

D. Monarch Presentation Reimbursement & Book Donation

Chairman Chouinard paid \$240 for the Monarch presentation and \$20 for the book to donate to the library, as suggested by Ms. Munson. A thank-you card was signed by the Commission members and will be sent to Donna, thanking her for giving the presentation.

46 *Ms. Munson moved to reimburse Chairman Chouinard \$260 for the Monarch*
48 *presentation and the book. Mr. Hume seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were*
in favor except Chairman Chouinard, who abstained. The motion passed 7-0-1.

50 **E. Wason Pond Bridge**

52 Selectman Myette reported that the town engineer (Dubois & King) has inspected the
54 Ash Street bridge and come up with an estimate of \$125,000: \$45,000 for the feasibility
56 study (coming up with a conceptual design) and the rest for construction oversight. The
construction of the bridge is estimated to be roughly \$375,000. These numbers have been
put into the CIP. There are impact fees to cover some of the cost of the feasibility study.
Ms. Snyder is researching grants to cover part of the cost.

58 **F. ESRLAC Dues**

60 Chairman Chouinard reported Exeter Swampscott River Local Advisory Committee
(ESRLAC) dues of \$200 are due.

62 *Ms. Snyder moved to continue support of the ESRLAC in the form of \$200 in dues. Mr.*
Hume seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion passed
unanimously.

64 **G. SHF, Lane Road Logging Discussion**

66 Selectman Myette reported that Dick Lewis will be finished with the timber cut on the
68 adjacent property in approximately two weeks. They are utilizing the landing area, which
they have stabilized. The Commission previously discussed having timber cut to build the
Pavilion while Mr. Lewis is in the area. A timber evaluation has not been done on the
property; it was timbered 30-40 years ago. Timber should be somewhat green to use as
building materials. Pine is desirable as it is lighter than hardwood but stronger per pound.

72 There has been discussion to move the Pavilion forward, as the bridge might not be
74 completed for years. \$40,000 has been set aside for the Pavilion in the CIP. The design
and the lumber list are complete. Recreation Director Reishus pushed the Pavilion back a
76 year in the CIP. The bridge construction takes priority over the Pavilion.

78 Chairman Chouinard walked the property and found a lot of 30-year-old growth. The
hemlocks seem to be doing better this year than they have in the past. Selectman Myette
80 said the Conservation Commission is responsible for managing the Town forests. The
\$40,000 would cover the cost of purchasing building materials, which could include pine
82 timbers.

84 The invasive species need to be removed from the natural area near the school. Selectman
Myette suggested holding a meeting to discuss removing invasives and how to manage
86 the old growth on Town property. There is funding available.

88 The Commission decided there is no reason to destroy habitat if there is no plan to use it
in the foreseeable future. The Commission agreed there is no financial incentive to have
90 any trees cut at this point.

92 **H. Habitat – Outreach to landowners**

93 Ms. Snyder and Ms. Munson are interested in conducting a public awareness campaign
94 regarding the decline of pollinators and educating residents on invasive plant species.
95 They would like to engage private landowners to determine what they are willing to do
96 on their property. The Commission discussed how to reach private landowners and
97 educate them about the need for more habitat for pollinators and how to remove
98 invasives. The Commission discussed partnering with local nurseries, landscapers, and
99 businesses to share this information. They will research doing a mailing, possibly sending
100 postcards.

101
102 The berries on invasive plants are not as nutritious as natural food sources. If birds cannot
103 find their natural food source and eat the invasives' berries, it lowers their reproductive
104 rate and less chicks are surviving to adulthood.

105 **I. Annual Report**

106 The Commission needs to write their annual report outlining what was done during the
107 fiscal year, ending June 30, 2021. Chairman Chouinard will email a list to Commission
108 members, who can volunteer to select items and write a paragraph for the report.
109

110 **J. Add Alternate Member**

111 Mr. Tranquillo is interested in joining the Commission as an alternate member. He and
112 Chairman Chouinard will attend a Board of Selectmen meeting to be sworn in, so he can
113 vote when filling in for a Committee member.
114

115 *The Commission voted unanimously to move forward with the nomination of Mr. Nick*
116 *Tranquillo as an alternate.*
117

118 **K. Resignation – Aaron Hume**

119 Mr. Hume has accepted a job in Haverhill and will be relocating. He can no longer be a
120 member of the Commission as he will not be a resident of Chester. He will attend
121 meetings and help as he can. The Commission expressed their gratitude for the work he
122 has done. He has been an asset to the Commission.
123

124 **L. Social Media – Increase interest in conservation**

125 Ms. Snyder reported that on the Front Porch page in Facebook, people are noticing the
126 new development in town. There appears to be confusion regarding the role the
127 Conservation Commission plays, what an easement is, etc. There is an interest in
128 conservation but a lot of uncertainty and mistrust of the Town. She suggested the
129 Commission clarify definitions as well as describe what the Commission does, possibly
130 on video.
131

132 Ms. Munson suggested sharing information on the Chester Chatter page instead of only
133 on the Conservation Commission page. Ms. Neff Ragsdale pointed out this would be a
134 better option than individual Commission members becoming involved in discussions on

social media sites and acting as individual representatives of the Commission in these responses.

Selectman Myette agreed this is a good opportunity to counterpoint issues on the Commission page that are seen on other sites. There is increased interest from developers in Chester. It would be useful for people to know what the Commission (and the Planning Board) does in terms of protecting land via conservation easements.

III. Regular Business

A. Review Minutes – October

Selectman Myette moved to approve the minutes from the October 12, 2021 meeting as written. Ms. Snyder seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor except Mr. Hume, who abstained. The motion passed 6-0-1.

B. Subcommittee reports

1. Strategic Land Protection Committee – SLPC

Chairman Chouinard had nothing to report.

2. Treasurer's Report

Savings account:

\$ 480,561.60 starting balance

40.82 interest

\$ 480,602.42 ending balance

Conservation Forestry account:

\$ 41,267.34 starting balance

3.50 interest

\$ 41,270.84 ending balance

Selectman Myette reported that Dick Lewis cleaned up around the logging landing and sent a check for \$80 for the firewood he obtained.

Lincoln Lane account:

\$ 3,094.40 starting balance

0.26 interest

\$ 3,094.66 ending balance

Emerson Conservation Easement:

\$ 10,235.15 starting balance

0.87 interest

\$ 10,236.02 ending balance

The Commission was given \$15,590 in current use for October, which is not reflected in these numbers. Selectman Myette said it is recorded quarterly.

Regular account:

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

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

3. Spring Hill Farm

Ms. Snyder reported a yield of 1,188 hay bales. They sold 455 bales and the cattlemen were given 516 bales. At the date of the last meeting, the Farm had 157 bales to sell, which have probably been sold by now. There is Carolina thistle in one of the fields, which is an invasive that needs to be controlled. Although it is not toxic, the berries that come out in the fall are toxic to horses. Mr. Alex Bartels has contacted UNH for more information.

They are producing a quarterly newsletter headed up by Kim Rairdon and Beth Sautter. There was a good article on Monarchs and pollinators that Ms. Snyder shared on the Conservation Facebook page; it is also on the Town website and the SHF Facebook page. A winter issue will be produced.

Autumn olive in the back is an invasive and needs to be removed. It can be done this winter as time permits.

On February 26th, there will be a winter carnival sponsored by the SHFAC and the 300th Anniversary Celebration Committee.

Selectman Myette reported a contractor who specializes in aluminum ADA ramps met with representatives from the Town at the farmhouse. The ramp will come into the back room (the milk room) and will be a U shape. That will preserve space in the room to add an ADA handicapped bathroom. They are waiting for estimated costs. Funds have been raised, plus a \$2,500 grant from Eversource. They will move forward with the ramp and do additional work on the inside, depending on available funds.

4. Wason Pond Conservation area

Ms. Snyder reported the Wason Pond Commission is over budget due to the cost of the barriers placed on the Causeway Bridge. The dog ordinance was approved, so Ranger Wright can ticket people with dogs off-leash.

Ms. Neff Ragsdale reported the boot camp is still on Tuesdays and Thursdays, but it can be held virtually if necessary. Senior Fitness is continuing online. The ADA ramp being constructed at the Wason Pond Community Center was delayed due to problems finding a concrete installer. Selectman Myette said the concrete work is scheduled to be done this week and the ramp installed next week.

Beaver update: Chairman Chouinard reported that he purchased a grapple hook to clean out the Causeway Bridge, which works well. A more effective hook is being constructed. It is too shallow under the bridge, but nothing can be done without a permit to dredge. This will be considered in the new bridge design. Beavers can plug the opening in two nights. The pond is starting to freeze, so there will be a reprieve.

5. Easements, Monitoring, and Stewardship

Mr. Hume had nothing to report.

6. Quote

Chairman Chouinard reported that Rockingham County Conservation District (RCCD) monitors the Scott (Root) Farm and the Wilson Farm. These easements require special paperwork, as they are farm properties. The estimate for the service is \$583, which has not changed since last year. Selectman Myette asked why only two farms are being monitored. If they are willing to monitor more properties, it would be advisable. Chairman Chouinard will discuss this and ask them to monitor more parcels (especially the ones that need baselines), and get an estimate for that service.

Selectman Myette moved to authorize the release of \$583 to Rockingham County Conservation District for the monitoring of two properties. Ms. Snyder seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

7. RCCD

Chairman Chouinard spoke with RCCD regarding the South Woods parcels. There are seven or eight small parcels out there. He asked if these could be combined into one parcel and be surveyed, would RCCD be willing to take that on, as they are out there doing Herrick Woods. They are not taking on any more easements, but as it is in close proximity to a parcel they have already taken on, they said they will entertain it. He asked they to put together a proposal that will be brought to their Board. He is attempting to get a survey done on the properties. Selectman Myette suggested a lot line adjustment might be sufficient, if the properties are contiguous. However, Chairman Chouinard said surveys are vital to correctly identifying properties. The funds to pay for the survey would come from the Conservation Fund.

Selectman Myette recommended contacting Town Planner Andrew Hadik to discuss this issue, and request a survey from the Town engineer if necessary.

IV. Plan Reviews

There are no plan reviews.

V. Miscellaneous Business

There are no plan reviews.

VI. Adjourn

274 *Selectman Myette moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:39 PM. Ms. Snyder seconded the*
276 *motion. A vote was taken and all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.*

278 *Respectfully submitted,*
 Beth Haggeli, Recording Secretary

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