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**Town of Chester
Conservation Commission
February 8, 2022
7:00 PM
Approved Minutes**

Members present:

Chairman Victor Chouinard
Kristina Snyder
Deb Munson
Ted Broadwater
Nick Tranquillo
Selectman Chuck Myette, Liaison

Members absent:

Rick Sibley
Kathleen Neff Ragsdale

Guests present:

Chester PACT

I. Call to Order

Chair Chouinard called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM.

II. New Business

A. Lincoln Lane Reimbursement

Chairman Chouinard reported the Lincoln Lane residents submitted a receipt for reimbursement for \$116.66.

Ms. Munson moved to reimburse the Lincoln Lane residents \$116.66 from the Lincoln Lane fund. Ms. Snyder seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor except Selectman Myette, who abstained, as he will sign as a Selectman. The motion passed 5-0-1.

B. Library Summer Reading Program

Ms. Munson spoke with the librarian at the Chester Public Library. They are looking for one-hour water-related presentations, as that is their summer reading topic. She isn't sure if the audience is adults or children. Ms. Munson will check with Ms. Maryjo Siergiej for more details. The Commission is interested in doing this.

C. Wason Pond Bridge Engineering

Chairman Chouinard reported the estimate for the bridge engineering is \$62,500. Selectman Myette said half of the cost will be covered by Recreation impact fees already collected. Chairman Chouinard asked if the Commission would be interested in picking up the other half of the engineering cost.

Ms. Munson asked if the design considers the environmental impact of the bridge.
48 Selectman Myette said the engineer said the design phase will include a conceptual
50 design of what would go there. They are leaning toward an open bottom conservation
52 bridge 15' to 20' in length, with a similar structure to what is there now on top of it. This
54 will be a less favorable design for beaver activity, but they cannot guarantee the beavers
will not plug it in the future. It will be engineered to bear 12 tons, to support emergency
equipment.

The Commission is interested in moving this project forward. The current bridge needs to
56 be replaced eventually. Mr. Broadwater asked if this will set a precedent that the
Commission will build bridges. Selectman Myette said this is conservation land, so it is
58 an appropriate use of Conservation funds. Selectman Myette believes this is a good faith
effort, working with Recreation to move the project forward.

Chairman Chouinard believes this bridge will improve the value of the property, alleviate
62 the frequency of beaver problems, and provide the necessary flow based on the power of
the storms being modeled in the future.

64
***Ms. Munson moved that the Conservation Commission will fund the Wason Pond
66 bridge engineering work for \$31,250. Mr. Tranquillo seconded the motion. A vote was
68 taken. All were in favor except Selectman Myette, who abstained, as he will sign as a
Selectman. The motion passed 5-0-1.***

70 **D. South Woods Parcels**

The Town has purchased a number of parcels that do not have conservation easements on
72 them. They were purchased with conservation funds and some have questionable
boundaries. Chairman Chouinard believes a good place to start is by asking the Planning
74 Department if there is a reason not to combine the lots purchased in South Woods and put
an easement on them. The two Town-owned properties will have to be left out, as they
76 were not purchased with conservation funds and they will need to get permission from
the voters to merge these two lots into the conservation area. This would be done by
78 warrant article and it is too late to do this this year.

Chairman Chouinard spoke with the RCCD to see if they would take on this easement.
80 They said although they are not taking any new easements, they offered to bring it to
82 their Board, if the Commission puts together a proposal. This will have to be approved by
the Selectmen.

84 **E. Ledge Road Parcels**

86 Mr. Tranquillo is working on obtaining information on seven Town-owned parcels to
find out how the parcels were obtained and if surveys need to be done on them. Mr.
88 Tranquillo hopes to have more information for the next meeting. If a survey is needed on
Town-owned properties, the voters will need to give permission to pay for it.

90 **F. Sawmill Grant Easement Notification**

92 Chairman Chouinard reported this subdivision has a conservation easement trail right-of-
94 way that runs through three of the house lots. This was not noted on the property owners'
96 deeds. Selectman Myette noted it goes through their front yards. A notice of easement has
98 also need notified via registered mail. It is maintained by the New Hampshire DES.
Selectman Myette said the easement on the open space has not been filed.

100 The alternative is to find another trail system. Selectman Myette said the trail is not well-
102 identified and the landscaping has probably wiped out the existing trail. Chester does not
own the land nor the easement, so the state will need to enforce it. The Commission
needs to speak with the DES to discuss how this should be enforced.

104 **G. Jenkins Trail Easement**

106 Chairman Chouinard said there is an easement across two lots in Jenkins Farms for a trail
out to the conservation property, which is 140 acres. Selectman Myette said there is
108 currently no trail, but one could be installed in the open area between the two houses.
Chairman Chouinard said there is a very restricted deed, so they should copy the
110 restrictions into the easement when the easement is created.

112 **H. HB 307**

114 Chairman Chouinard reported that the RCCD is opposed to HB 307, which removes
Town jurisdiction over the use of weapons. They sent a letter to the governor to the
116 effect. Ms. Snyder noted this bill will declare any restrictions on the Wason Pond
property null and void. The RCCD says this bill will supersede the desires of the donors
of any land they've taken on. Ms. Snyder said the local government should know best
118 about how their land should be controlled.

120 Chairman Chouinard asked the Commission if they should draft a letter communicating
to the governor along the same lines as the RCCD letter. This would be presented from a
122 conservation perspective, addressing how it impacts conservation parcels and the future
acquisition of these parcels. Mr. Broadwater will draft the letter. Ms. Snyder will find out
124 when the bill is going before the governor.

126 *Chairman Chouinard moved to draft a letter to Governor Sununu in support of the
same position that the RCCD has taken, which is in opposition to HB 307. Ms. Snyder
128 seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion passed
unanimously.*

130 **I. Conservation Commission Joint Meeting**

132 Selectman Myette attended the Farm Expo and spoke with a member of the UNH
Extension, who is also on the Conservation Commission in Derry. They would like to
134 hold a joint meeting to learn what each town's Conservation Commission does and to
discuss contiguous trails to create regional trail networks. They would also discuss the
136 areas being protected and how to connect them.

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III. Regular Business

A. Review Minutes – January

Chairman Chouinard moved to approve the minutes from the January 11, 2022 meeting as written. Selectman Myette seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Subcommittee reports

1. Strategic Land Protection Committee – SLPC

Chairman Chouinard had nothing to report.

2. Treasurer’s Report

Savings account:

\$ 496,032.43 starting balance
28,542.13 inflows
\$ 524,574.56 ending balance

Conservation Forestry account:

\$ 41,274.24 starting balance
3.50 interest
\$ 41,277.74 ending balance

Lincoln Lane account:

\$ 3,094.91 starting balance
0.27 interest
\$ 3,095.18 ending balance

Chairman Chouinard reported that Chester Finance Director Smith said there's about \$600 left in the account. There is one expense to approve tonight and the Lincoln Lane residents have asked to spend the rest in the spring. He will make sure the expenses were not credited to a different account, as a balance is still shown here.

Emerson Conservation Easement:

\$ 10,236.86 starting balance
0.87 interest
\$ 10,237.73 ending balance

Regular account:

\$ 1,200.00 starting balance
691.99 Expenses (Exeter River watershed dues, subscriptions, reimbursements, miscellaneous items.
\$ 508.01 ending balance (42.33% of budget remaining)

182 *Mr. Broadwater moved to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented by*
184 *Chairman Chouinard. Ms. Munson seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all*
were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

186 **3. Spring Hill Farm**

Ms. Snyder reported the Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee discussed the
188 February 26th Winter Carnival on February 26th. The available activities will depend
on the weather. There will be a chili cookoff, warming tents, and a bonfire. The
190 event will be 2-7 PM. The bonfire will be 5-7 PM. Interested parties will be meeting
again to review the details and determine if ice skating and sledding will be possible.
192 The Boy Scouts are discussing spending the night and helping. Scout leader will be
offering curling, depending on the weather.

194
The SHFAC is still working on installing an ADA-compliant ramp at the farmhouse.
196 The estimate to build an aluminum ramp is roughly \$21,000. The Commission
discussed alternative methods to obtain and install a ramp. Wood would be more
198 affordable, but not permanent. Chairman Chouinard and Selectman Myette will
continue to research this.

200
The next issue of the quarterly newsletter will be out before the Winter Carnival.

202
They discussed improving the trail marking and maps. A subcommittee has been
204 started to work on this. Ms. Snyder reminded them not to blaze new trails and
overdo the signage, to keep the property as undeveloped as possible. Selectman
206 Myette mentioned they have discussed naming the trails with farm or animal themes.
He said they should be careful to only share Town-owned trails and not ones on
208 private properties.

210 **4. Wason Pond Conservation area**

Ms. Snyder reported there is not a lot of activity on the property. The Committee
212 discussed HB 307 and its impact. A resident organized an activity on the property
and was charging for it. They were notified this was not allowed and moved
214 elsewhere. Ranger Wright said people have been skating on the pond.

216 **5. Easements, Monitoring, and Stewardship**

Mr. Tranquillo is working on obtaining the materials required by the Rockingham
218 County Conservation District (RCCD) to establish baselines on conservation
properties. He has been working with Nancy at the Town Offices, and should have
220 more information available by the next Commission meeting.

222 Ms. Munson spoke with the University of New Hampshire (UNH), who provided the
training in the past. They didn't believe this work was something an undergrad or
224 graduate student could do. They sent her a list of qualified people that could be hired
to do it. She will find out when they are offering the training again. There might be
226 students in town interested.

228 Establishing a baseline is different than monitoring. The more information the
230 RCCD is given, the less hours they will have to put into the project. The
 Commission discussed the parcels that are of the highest priority to be addressed.

232 **IV. Plan Reviews**

 There are no plan reviews.

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V. Miscellaneous Business

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VI. Adjourn

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*Mr. Broadwater moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:43 PM. Mr. Tranquillo seconded the
240 motion. A vote was taken and all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.*

242

 Respectfully submitted,
 Beth Hanggeli, Recording Secretary