

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

**Members present:**

Chairman Victor Chouinard  
Kristina Snyder  
Deb Munson  
Ted Broadwater  
Nick Tranquillo  
Selectman Chuck Myette, Liaison (joined at 7:10)

**Members absent:**

Rick Sibley  
Kathleen Neff Ragsdale

**Guests present:**

Chester PACT

**I. Call to Order**

Chair Chouinard called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

**II. New Business**

**A. Email Votes**

Chairman Chouinard reported two votes were taken by email and unanimously approved. One was for \$276 for the purchase of folder sets to organize documentation in the Conservation Commission office. The other was for \$325 to cover dues for the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions.

**B. South Woods Parcels**

Chairman Chouinard reported the Commission would like to combine four lots, which include the South Woods parcel, into one lot. This property would be a good candidate to take to the legislative body as a warrant article at the next Town Meeting for permission to establish a conservation easement on it. He will make a list of the four lots to be merged and begin the easement process. The Commission discussed the technicalities of enhancing an easement by adding land to it.

**C. Ledge Road Parcels**

Mr. Tranquillo explained that of the seven Ledge Road parcels, five have confirmed deeds, four of which are collector's deeds (taken over by the Town for nonpayment of taxes). The Town Clerk's office said they might have the original deeds in their records for the two without deeds and will look for them. If they cannot find the deeds, the Town Clerk will put Mr. Tranquillo in touch with a company that does this type of research, to

find out if deeds do exist. The next step would be to hire a surveyor to mark boundaries for the parcels. Mr. Tranquillo will continue to work on this project.

#### **D. NH Coastal Watershed Conservation**

Ms. Munson reported she completed a survey for the New Hampshire Coastal Watershed Conservation, which asked how much the Commission knew about coastal waterways and how to mitigate damage caused by global warming and flooding, managing runoff, etc. They asked how they could help the Commission learn more about it. She told them there isn't much education done during the meetings, but if they could send information for the Commission to study on their own, that would be appreciated, or if they could send someone to conduct training. There has been no response as of yet. Chairman Chouinard said it would be beneficial to learn about these issues during Commission meetings.

Ms. Munson sat in on a Durham Conservation meetings and found it interesting how similar their meetings are to the Chester Conservation Commission meetings.

#### **E. Spring Projects?**

The Commission discussed possible spring projects, including brushing the field behind the farm and the trail that goes up the hill before the birds start nesting. Ms. Snyder said Spring Hill Farm is planning a spring clean-up day and can remove items that have been dumped on the property, most of which can be taken to the transfer station. The siding on the garage needs to be completed. There is a possible Boy Scout project in the works to convert the chicken coop to a garden center and build raised beds. The existing barns need to be upgraded, especially the timber frame building. The silo needs to be repainted. The trash on the Spring Hill Farm land off Lane Road needs to be cleaned up. They discussed Town properties that also need to be cleaned up. The Commission will choose projects at the next meeting for an Earth Day clean up.

Ms. Munson asked about a community garden at Spring Hill. Selectman Myette said most residents have enough land that they have no interest in a garden elsewhere.

### **III. Regular Business**

#### **A. Review Minutes – February**

*Mr. Broadwater moved to approve the minutes from the February 8, 2022 meeting as written. Mr. Tranquillo 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, as has been the case for the last three months. He has not sent out an official letter of inquiry for the last two months.

##### **2. Treasurer's Report**

Chairman Chouinard presented the report, as Ms. Neff Ragsdale was not present at the meeting.

*Savings account:*

\$ 524,574.56 starting balance  
979.80 expenses  
44.12 interest  
\$ 523,638.88 ending balance

Chairman Chouinard explained that due to the process for approving and recording expenditures, he does not have an itemized accounting. All expenses are approved before the funds are paid out. He believed the bulk of these expenses is most likely the cost of the monitoring done by the Rockingham County Conservation District (RCCD).

*Conservation Forestry account:*

\$ 41,277.74 starting balance  
3.51 interest  
\$ 41,281.25 ending balance

*Lincoln Lane account:*

\$ 3,095.18 starting balance  
2,593.86 transferred to General Fund  
\$ 501.46 ending balance

Chairman Chouinard believes another expense has come in and has been approved. The Lincoln Lane residents will need more materials in the spring, which should take care of the remaining balance in their account.

*Emerson Conservation Easement:*

\$ 10,237.73 starting balance  
0.87 interest  
\$ 10,238.60 ending balance

*Regular account:*

\$ 1,200.00 starting balance  
1,024.56 expenses (include expense for NHACC)  
\$ 175.44 ending balance (42.33% of budget remaining)

Chairman Chouinard noted that next year, the categories should be adjusted to avoid negative balances. As this is a bottom-line budget, the Commission is not deficit spending overall, just in specific categories.

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

138  
140 **3. Spring Hill Farm**

142 Ms. Snyder reported the Winter Festival was held on February 26<sup>th</sup> and was a big  
144 success. More people attended this event than the Fall Festival – estimated between  
146 400-700 people. There are plans to make it an annual event, although it might be  
148 earlier next year to ensure a better chance of there being enough snow.

150  
152 Selectman Myette said parking will need to be increased next year. Cars were parked  
154 on Wason Road. There was a lull between the end of the chili cookoff and the  
156 bonfire, so some people left. He congratulated Ms. Kim Rairdon on doing an  
158 outstanding job with the kids' games. He said someone suggested it should have been  
160 a fundraiser for Spring Hill Farm. Ms. Snyder said there was a donation jar onsite.

162 Ms. Snyder reported that Selectman Landau knows someone who is considering  
164 constructing the ADA ramp as an Eagle Scout project. The SHFAC is trying to make  
166 the farmhouse compliant so it can be used. The Commission discussed other options  
168 for constructing a ramp.

170 The High Tunnel MOU is completed. The Ortins will be onsite for another year. The  
172 cattlemen are still negotiating their contract.

174 The tentative Fall Festival date is September 10, 2022.

176 The current edition of the quarterly SHF newsletter is available. If anyone has ideas  
178 for content related to conservation, let Ms. Snyder know. Selectman Myette  
180 suggested discussing the easement on the property.

182 Ms. Snyder suggested doing a pedestrian count to find out how many people are  
184 using the property, the trails, etc. Chairman Chouinard suggested adding stone on the  
186 road from the High Tunnel toward the farmhouse to begin building a base to solve  
188 the mud issue.

190 Selectman Myette reported Ms. Kim Rairdon has created a trail map with a QR code  
192 that accesses an app to track participants as they travel the trails and this might be  
194 useful at Wason Pond. Ms. Snyder said the trails will be marked as colored loops  
196 once the weather is better, although they have not determined how they will be  
198 marked. She has contacted the RCCD for their input.

200 Mr. Tranquillo has a friend who specializes in renovating classic New England  
202 farmhouses who has offered to volunteer as a consultant. Selectman Myette  
204 explained the Board of Selectman would like the farmhouse to be utilized, while  
206 keeping the historic appearance, but it must be ADA compliant. There has not been a  
208 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) project proposed to come up with a dollar  
210 amount. Ms. Snyder said there is renewed energy in the SHFAC to find funding for  
212 this project.

**4. Wason Pond Conservation area**

Ms. Snyder reported that a member of the public, Mary Dutton, asked permission to install a box at the bench overlooking the pond for people to leave notes, similar to a guest book. There was a Tupperware box at the site in the past, but it disappeared. The WPC approved the project, asking that it be built to match the character of the area. Her son is a carpenter, so will construct a rustic box.

She said Mr. Dave Webster reported there is erosion on the pond side of the covered bridge as well as on the beach that needs to be addresses. She said Mr. John Dalrymple shared a dam inspection report with Selectman Myette, who spoke to the Town Maintenance Department. They will inspect the dam and most likely apply riprap.

Ms. Snyder and Ms. Munson still want to plant a small pollinator area near the Community Center and the WPC agreed.

Dogs have been running loose on the fields, as the "no dogs" signs have been removed. New signs will be posted.

The Pavilion project is still on hold, as they are focusing on the bridge construction.

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

Mr. Tranquillo reported there is a recorded easement attached to the Emerson property; however, it was not signed or recorded. Selectman Myette recommended contacting the Planning Board to start the process, as this would have been a requirement of the subdivision open space. If it is on the plan, they would need to examine the ownership of the property to find out if it has been deeded to the Town or if the original owner, Mr. Abdallah, still holds it. Chairman Chouinard believes Mr. Abdallah was going to turn it over to the Town, but never signed it. Mr. Abdallah is deceased and the corporation no longer exists. If the residents of the subdivision do not own it, the Town can lay claim to it.

Mr. Tranquillo submitted two packages to the RCCD: the Noyes property and Pipit Estates. The intention is to prioritize properties with easements but no baseline. Chairman Chouinard has ranked the next three in importance as the Ennis property, the Cartier property, and the Loranger property. The Commission discussed what needs to be done regarding obtaining easements on these and other properties.

Mr. Tranquillo hopes to make progress on the easements of two or three properties each month to present to the Commission. Chairman Chouinard will give Mr. Tranquillo information about this project, including connecting him with an attorney. Ms. Munson clarified that language on a deed can change with ownership, so an easement is needed to establish the intended use of a property, and Chairman Chouinard agreed. The Commission thanked Mr. Tranquillo for his work on this project.

**IV. Plan Reviews**

There were no plan reviews.

**V. Miscellaneous Business**

**A. HB 307**

Mr. Broadwater shared a draft of a letter from the Commission to the governor regarding their opposition to HB 307. Ms. Snyder said the Senate has sent an amended version of the bill to the House, which includes the removal of the word "use" of weapons. The NHACC has also written a letter to the governor in opposition of this bill. Selectman Myette pointed out that most of the items in this bill are already law as of 2011. This bill covers the enforcement of the laws. Per Senator Gannon, no action will be taken on this bill for a while.

The Commission decided that since the RCCD and the NHACC are standing by their letters, they should follow the lead of these organizations and send their letter to the governor. Mr. Broadwater will amend the letter to reflect that this is the Commission's stance on the bill as written on March 8<sup>th</sup>. It can be sent again, if the language of the bill is revised.

**B. Letters returned**

Three letters were sent out. One came back signed. One was returned non-deliverable from Hemlock Lane.

**C. Purchase of book**

The New Hampshire Planning and Land Use Regulations book is purchased every year, if any of the members of the Commission would like to read it.

**D. Sample pens**

Sample pens were received from National Pen and shared with the Commission members.

**D. Vests**

At the Spring Hill Winter Fest, Chairman Chouinard and Ms. Snyder wore their Chester Conservation vests as they were directing traffic. It was a good way to advertise the Commission. Mr. Broadwater will order vests for other Commission members to wear at other events.

**VI. Adjourn**

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

Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Hanggeli, Recording Secretary