

**Town of Chester
Conservation Commission
October 11, 2022
7:00 PM
Draft Minutes**

Members present:

Chairman Victor Chouinard
Kristina Snyder
Deb Munson
Rick Sibley
Kathleen Neff Ragsdale
Nick Tranquillo
Eric McGowan, Alternate
Selectman Chuck Myette, Liaison

Members absent:

Ted Broadwater

Guests present:

Chester PACT

I. Call to Order

Chair Chouinard called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

II. New Business

A. Nick Tranquillo – Promote to Full Board Member

Mr. Tranquillo was promoted to full board member.

B. Eric McGowan – new alternate Board Member

Mr. McGowan introduced himself and reviewed his background. Chairman Chouinard added that when Mr. McGowan purchased his property, he took the initiative to learn about the conservation easement.

Ms. Snyder moved to accept Eric McGowan as an alternate member of the Conservation Commission. Ms. Munson seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

C. Bat Barn Update

Chairman Chouinard updated the Commission on the status of the Eagle Scout bat barn project. The Commission discussed having the Natural Heritage Bureau (NHB) do a survey to understand if there are hot spots for protected species in town, and have it updated once or twice a year. Selectman Myette explained that when protected species are found, a plan will need to be created to protect them. Chairman Chouinard will share

the NHB report from Spring Hill Farm with the Commission at the next meeting. Ms. Neff Ragsdale suggested contacting the NHB and asking them to do a town-wide survey.

The Eagle Scout candidate still needs to find a place to locate the bat barn. New Hampshire Fish & Game does not believe there is an established bat colony or endangered bat species in the area, so they do not feel that a bat barn is feasible. The Commission has requested that bat biologists contact the candidate, but they are busy. The Commission considered locating the barn at North Pond and did some clearing, but maintenance will be an issue.

The Commission discussed alternate locations for the barn. There is no Rockingham County Conservation District (RCCD) easement on the Loranger property, so there might not be a problem locating it there. Chairman Chouinard will continue to pursue this.

D. Dumping Complaint

Chairman Chouinard reported there was a complaint regarding dumping possibly bagged deer parts on Loranger. He and Ms. Snyder investigated this, but found nothing. Selectman Myette said there was a similar report made earlier and the Chester Police Department investigated as well.

E. November Meeting Date

The Commission agreed to meet on November 14th, due to November 8th being Election Day.

F. RCCD's Invasive Species Mitigation Visit

Mr. Tranquillo reported that representatives from the RCCD and the Conservation Commission toured Wason Pond and the east parcels of Spring Hill Farm last month. He shared their findings regarding invasive species. They will revisit the sites to produce a proposal for mitigation, which could be \$500/acre. This price could vary, depending on the density of the infestation. Treatment will include spraying, cutting, and removal where possible. Permits must be obtained, as these are environmentally sensitive areas. The work would not be done until next fall.

The representatives also made recommendations regarding dealing with the erosion around the causeway bridge at Wason Pond. They also discussed marking sensitive areas that need to be avoided on the properties.

Ms. Snyder pointed out that the Wason Pond Commission and the Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee would need to be involved in discussions regarding mitigation work done on these properties and what chemicals would be used. The Commission expressed concerns regarding the use of Roundup. Chairman Chouinard asked Mr. Tranquillo to find out what the cost would be to not use chemicals in the mitigation process. Ms. Snyder also pointed out the goats are active on Spring Hill Farm, so they would be impacted by any chemical used. The Commission also discussed how invasives in and around the wetlands would be handled. Mr. Tranquillo will continue to pursue this issue.

G. FY24 Budget

Chairman Chouinard noted that most expenses are taken out of the general conservation fund. The Commission discussed the various categories included in the budget, which is a bottom-line budget. They discussed sending a mailer to educate the Town on what the Conservation Commission does. They also discussed which members would be attending the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions (NHACC) meeting. Chairman Chouinard will present the budget to the Board of Selectman.

Mr. Tranquillo moved that the Conservation Commission move forward with a budget of \$1,551 for FY24. Ms. Snyder seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Regular Business

A. Review Minutes – August 9, 2022

On line 79, TADF should be Taking Action for Wildlife Team. Line 156 should be Millstone Wildlife Center.

Ms. Munson moved to approve the minutes from the August 9, 2022 meeting as amended. Mr. Tranquillo seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Subcommittee reports

1. Treasurer's Report

Ms. Neff Ragsdale reported the following:

Savings account:

\$ 592,021.82 starting balance
578.51 credits (interest + current use funds)
\$ 592,600.33 ending balance

Conservation Forestry account:

\$ 41,349.86 starting balance
40.41 interest
\$ 41,390.27 ending balance

Lincoln Lane account:

\$ 385.59 starting balance
0.38 interest
\$ 385.97 ending balance

Emerson Conservation Easement:

\$ 10,255.62 starting balance
10.02 interest
\$ 10,265.64 ending balance

Regular account:

\$ 1,137.87 starting balance
0.00 expenditures
1,137.87 ending balance, or 94.82% of budget

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

2. Spring Hill Farm

Ms. Snyder reported that the Ortins ended their CSA. A Winter Festival is being planned, with the date still to be determined. She noted that it is the perfect time to see the bittersweet and work on eradicating some of it due to the contrasting colors.

3. Wason Pond Conservation Area

Ms. Snyder reported that the Committee was asked for input on the bridge design. Selectman Myette asked if the engineer from DuBois & King had attended a meeting, but he has not. He noted the intent is to connect with the engineer to determine a style for the bridge.

Ms. Snyder reported that the beavers are still there, but there is no flow. However, there has been activity underneath the bridge and trees are being felled. Wason Pond Committee members expressed concern over trees falling on walkers on the trails. She recommended people need to be educated about the beavers and that they are not a threat to human activity.

4. Easements, Monitoring, and Stewardship

Chairman Chouinard updated the Commission on installing signage at two of the older developments with conservation easements that were not marked. He obtained permission from a homeowner to access the area to find out if the easement was pinned. He found no signs of the easement being pinned, but he did find the drill set and property bound. He will reach out to the other homeowners again to see if they will agree to the area being marked with the new conservation easement signs. After this is done, the RCCD can do a baseline.

Mr. Tranquillo updated the Commission on the status of packages submitted to the RCCD for baseline monitoring as well as properties still needing to be surveyed so that they can be monitored. Selectman Myette noted that when the cost of surveying is over \$5,000, competitive bids will be needed. The Commission also discussed applying easements to properties that don't currently have them.

IV. Non-public meeting - Strategic Land Protection

Chairman Chouinard asked for a motion to go into 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

184 *those of the general community. Ms. Munson made the motion and Mr. Tranquillo*
185 *seconded it. A vote was taken and all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.*

186 The cameras were turned off at 8:52 PM.
187 The meeting room was reopened.

188 *A motion was made and seconded that the Commission come out of non-public session.*
189 *A vote was taken and all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.*

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191 **V. Return to Regular Meeting**

192 *A motion was made and seconded to seal the minutes for the non-public session*
193 *indefinitely. A vote was taken and all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.*

194 **VI. Adjourn**

195 *A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. A vote was taken and all were*
196 *in favor. The motion passed unanimously.*

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198 The meeting was adjourned.

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200 Respectfully submitted,
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202 Beth Hanggeli, Recording Secretary