

**Town of Chester
Conservation Commission
February 14, 2023
6:00 PM
Approved Minutes**

Broadcast on Channel 20 and streamed on Government (cablecast.tv) – click “Watch Now”

Members present:

Chairman Victor Chouinard
Kristina Snyder (joined at 6:15 p.m.)
Deb Munson
Ted Broadwater
Nick Tranquillo
Selectman Chuck Myette, Liaison

Members absent:

Rick Sibley
Kathleen Neff Ragsdale
Eric McGowan, Alternate

Guests present:

Amanda Stone, UNH Cooperative Extension
Barbara Richter, NHACC
Chester PACT

I. Call to Order

Chair Chouinard called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM.

II. New Business

A. NHACC / UNH Cooperative in-person discussion

Amanda Stone, State Specialist Natural Resources and Conservation, UNH Cooperative Extension and Barbara Richter, Executive Director of New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions conducted a workshop on how to interpret the Coastal Conservation Plan and the Wildlife Action Plan maps, and how the Commission could put them to use when creating a conservation checklist and Natural Resources Inventory (NRI).

Ms. Stone explained the Coastal Conservation Plan focus areas are based on wildlife corridor data, wildlife action plan data, climate resilience data, and water resources data. The maps are updated every five years, although no maps are 100% representational. These are the best product that can be obtained and provide a good idea of where the important areas are.

46 She noted that animals move around, so are difficult to pinpoint in a specific location,
48 although the maps do note species that are likely to be found in certain areas. Ms. Stone
suggested residents could contribute information regarding where species are observed in
Chester.

50 Ms. Stone pointed out pieces of land that could be used to tie existing conservation
52 properties together. Selectman Myette noted this could be instrumental when approving
open space subdivisions. Ms. Stone explained how parcels that have been conserved can
54 be submitted to be included in these maps.

56 Ms. Richter pointed out aquatic passage designations and noted locations that are
currently blocked and might need culverts installed or cleaned out. She reviewed possible
58 sources of funding and will do further research on this. Ms. Stone noted water passage is
important to wildlife and if a culvert blows out, it can be expensive to address.

60 Selectman Myette noted these maps will be helpful to show the Town the importance of
62 the four properties included in the Warrant Articles at the Town Meeting this year. Ms.
Richter noted the data on these maps can also help the Chester Planning Board make
64 informed decisions. Selectman Myette suggested the Commission should meet with the
Planning Board to share this information.

66 The Commission will work on the checklist and contact Ms. Stone and Ms. Richter if
68 further assistance is needed. They thanked Ms. Stone and Ms. Richter for their help.

70 **B. Reimbursement for Land Survey Retainer**

Chairman Chouinard told the Commission that Mr. Tranquillo paid the retainer, so the
72 land survey could be started. Mr. Tranquillo said surveyors were on the land today.

74 *Ms. Snyder moved to reimburse Mr. Tranquillo \$4,999 for the land survey retainer fee.*
Ms. Munson seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion
76 *passed unanimously.*

78 **C. Spring Hill Farm Species Survey Proposals**

Ms. Snyder reviewed two proposals for conducting a species survey at Spring Hill Farm.
80 This has been recommended as the Rockingham County Conservation District (RCCD)
requires more detailed information before approving projects (i.e. Eagle Scout projects)
82 on the property and the New Hampshire Fish & Game is currently not able to do this
work due to staffing shortages. The Commission discussed the proposals and suggested
84 obtaining revised proposals, which would include potentially conducting an NRI and
adjusting the land being surveyed. Ms. Snyder will contact Company B to obtain a
86 revised proposal.

88 *Ms. Munson moved to approve the proposal from Company B to do the Spring Hill*
Farm species survey, with the condition that the bid includes all of the land on the east

90 *side of Wason Road. Mr. Broadwater seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were*
91 *in favor. The motion passed unanimously.*

92
93 **D. Conservation Easement Reviews**

94 Chairman Chouinard sent out two conservation easements for four parcels to be
95 reviewed, the Noyes parcel and three parcels approved for conservation easement at the
96 1999 Town Meeting. Selectman Myette commented that one parcel has a unique notation
97 regarding being preserved for "nature study," but he does not know what the long-term
98 ramifications of this wording will be, if any. Chairman Chouinard suggested the term be
99 changed to "observing nature" to remove any ambiguity. This change will be presented to
100 the Board of Selectmen for approval.

101 *Mr. Tranquillo moved to move the two conservation easements under discussion for*
102 *approval by the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Broadwater seconded the motion. A vote was*
103 *taken, all were in favor except Selectman Myette, in light of his role as a Selectman.*
104 *The motion passed 5-0-1.*

105
106 **E. Warrant Articles**

107 Chairman Chouinard shared the Warrant Articles with the members of the Commission.
108 He will speak at the Town Meeting in support of these Articles and invited other
109 members to speak as well. Selectman Myette noted that if these Articles are passed, they
110 do not involve any cost to the legislative body. The Commission discussed the definition
111 of a Town Forest.

112
113 **III. Regular Business**

114 **A. Review Minutes – January 10, 2023**

115
116 *Ms. Munson moved to approve the minutes from the January 10, 2023 meeting as*
117 *written. Mr. Tranquillo seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor except*
118 *Mr. Broadwater, who abstained. The motion passed 5-0-1.*

119
120 **B. Subcommittee reports**

121 **1. Treasurer's Report**

122 Chairman Chouinard reported the following, in Ms. Neff Ragsdale's absence:

123 *Regular Conservation account:*

124
125 \$ 1,017.83 original fund balance
126 (325.00) NHACC conservation dues
127 (35.00) printing costs
128 542.17 ending balance

129 *Savings account:*

130
131 \$ 63,816.14 starting balance
132 (30,000.00) Noyes parcel purchase
133 55,587.02 book transfer credits for counties
134 89,403.16 ending balance

Conservation Forestry account:

\$ 1,475.67 starting balance

3.15 interest

\$ 1,478.82 ending balance

Lincoln Lane account:

\$ 387.81 starting balance

0.83 interest

\$ 388.64 ending balance

Emerson Conservation Easement:

\$ 286.60 starting balance

00.61 interest

\$ 287.21 ending balance

Conservation Forestry CD: (jumbo CD earning 3.75%)

\$ 40,218.10 starting balance

128.09 interest

\$ 40,346.19 ending balance

Regular Conservation account CD: (jumbo CD earning 3.75%)

\$ 552,998.82 starting balance

1,761.27 interest

\$ 554,760.09 ending balance

Emerson Conservation Easement CD: (CD earning 3.75%)

\$ 10,054.52 starting balance

32.03 interest

\$ 10,086.55 ending balance

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

2. Spring Hill Farm

Ms. Snyder reported the Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee (SHFAC) discussed the Winter Festival, scheduled for February 18th. Due to the weather, parking in the hay fiend is a concern. As there is no snow, some of the activities will not be held, but there are others planned.

A brochure has been created with the history of the farm and the conservation aspect of it. It will be placed in libraries and handed out to get information out about the farm.

182 The discussed projects and goals for 2023, but there are no conservation projects on
the list.

184 The cattlemen would like to renew their lease. Selectman Myette reported the maple
186 lease has been signed and given to Andy Chisholm.

3. Wason Pond Conservation Area

188 Mr. Tranquillo attended the meeting and presented the updated invasive control
190 proposal from RCCD, which removes the playground from the treatment area and
replaces Roundup with other herbicides. The Commission voted unanimously to
192 move forward with the project. They will be meeting with the Board of Selectmen
on Thursday to discuss this. The cost of the project is \$4,240, which the
194 Conservation Commission has already approved payment. The Recreation
Department is working with RCCD on timing of the treatment.

196 Ms. Snyder noted that there was a discussion on the cost of removing trees that have
fallen during winter storms.

198 Ms. Snyder said the need to replace the temporary Ash Street bridge was discussed.
200 The Wason Pond Commission would like the fire chief to attend a meeting and
explain the need for a new bridge. She reported the consensus was that a new bridge
202 is not needed. Selectman Couture pointed out if the Wason Pond Commission does
not want a new bridge, they should notify the Board of Selectmen. Chairman
204 Chouinard commented that during a heavy rainstorm in the fall, the water was at the
top of the steel beam. So, the risk of not replacing the bridge is that eventually, the
206 sediments will back up and the causeway will be at risk. Ms. Snyder noted that what
is beneficial to the wildlife is not being considered.

208 Selectman Myette noted the Town engineer was concerned that if this bridge gives
210 way, it will impact the weir, which will impact the culverts on Route 102. The
rationale is that the bridge is undersized and the hydraulics are changing in the
212 watershed, so it is a matter of time before it fails. There are also structural issues. A
grant has been submitted to cover part of the cost of replacing the bridge. He noted
214 that public safety and emergency response are important, as are drainage issues. He
suggested bringing the engineer back to meet with the Wason Pond Commission.

4. Easements, Monitoring, and Stewardship

218 Mr. Tranquillo presented an invoice from RCCD for \$49 for easement monitoring of
Premier Estates, an 18.5 acre parcel.

220 *Mr. Broadwater moved to approve payment of \$49 to RCCD for easement*
222 *monitoring of Premier Estates. Ms. Snyder seconded the motion. A vote was taken.*
224 *All were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.*

226 Mr. Tranquillo said there are 11 parcels in limbo as far as baseline production for a
number of reasons. He is working with Chairman Chouinard to clear up any

228 outstanding issues and proceed with obtaining baselines on these parcels. There are
230 nine parcels that need to be monitored, six of which are pending. He is waiting for
proposals on the other three.

232 **5. Strategic Land Protection**

Chairman Chouinard reported the Noyes closing went smoothly.

234 **IV. Next meeting: March 13, 2023**

236 **V. Adjourn**

238 *Mr. Broadwater moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Snyder seconded the motion. A vote*
240 *was taken and all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.*

242 The meeting was adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

244 Respectfully submitted,

Beth Hanggeli, Recording Secretary