

Town of Chester
Conservation Commission – Business Meeting
May 9, 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
Deb Munson
Ted Broadwater
Selectwoman Dana Theokas

Members absent:

Nick Tranquillo
Rick Sibley
Kathleen Neff Ragsdale
Eric McGowan, Alternate

Guests present:

Conor Madison, GZA Project Manager
Ashley Friend, Eversource Licensing & Permitting
Mikael Cejtin, public guest
Chester PACT

I. Call to Order

Chair Chouinard called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

II. New Business/Updates

A. Eversource

Mr. Conor Madison and Ms. Ashley Ruprecht discussed their application for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for temporary wetland impacts during the upcoming wood pole to steel replacement project. Five utility structures are being replaced. They explained the measures being taken to protect the wetlands and wildlife.

The Commission discussed the ongoing issue with ATVs accessing roads under the powerlines and trespassing on private property. Mr. Broadwater urged Eversource to erect more robust barriers around the gates to hopefully deter the ATV riders from trespassing.

44 The Commission agreed they had no issues with Chairman Chouinard drafting a letter to
46 the Planning Board stating that the Conservation Commission has reviewed the plans for
this project and has no objections. This CUP will be presented to the Planning Board at
their next meeting (May 10th).

48
B. Possible Ownership Conflict

50 Chairman Chouinard explained there is a question regarding ownership of a
Conservation-owned parcel (part of the Town Forest, Lot 597) and a privately-owned
52 parcel (Lot 816, part of the Colby subdivision). The bounds of both lots reference the
same deed. The owner has been made aware of this, as has the Town's attorney.

54
C. PREP NRI Grant Application

56 Chairman Chouinard reported that Mr. Tranquillo has submitted this grant application.
The Commission will be notified on May 15 if they have been awarded the grant. Mr.
58 Tranquillo will update the Commission at the next meeting, as he was not present at this
meeting.

60
D. Open Space and Master Plan

62 As Mr. Tranquillo was absent, there was no discussion on this topic.

64
E. Lincoln Lane Fund

Chairman Chouinard reviewed the history of this fund, as Selectwoman Theokas was not
66 familiar with it. He spoke with the Lincoln Lane residents regarding the remaining
monies in this fund. They agreed to purchase more supplies and submit receipts, or to
68 return the remaining funds to the Commission.

70
F. South Woods Survey Bids

Chairman Chouinard explained that approximately 80 acres (five to six parcels) in the
72 South Woods do not have conservation easements on them and have never been
surveyed. The Commission would like to have the property surveyed. The bounds aren't
74 marked. One Town-owned property has been included in this block. Bids for the
surveying were requested but more time is needed to compare those that were received,
76 so this will be discussed at the next meeting.

78
G. Pollinator Update

Ms. Munson shared that the Conservation Commission is sponsoring a pollinator garden
80 seed kit contest. This came about through the Commission's association with Pollinator
Pathways. A group of conservation commissions in Rockingham County is trying to
82 create pollinator corridors throughout the state and has made five kits available for each
conservation commission. The deadline for entry is Friday, May 19th.

84
Mr. Broadwater suggested posting a list of desirable pollinator plants on the Conservation
86 Commission's website and possibly adding a link to UNH. Ms. Munson will ask Town
Administrator Doda to do this.
88

90 Selectwoman Theokas noted that Chester Academy will host an Integrated Arts Night on
91 Friday, at which the Playground Fundraising Committee will be providing Plant a Seed
92 information. She will see if a QR code can be created that links to the Conservation
Commission page and the pollinator contest, and be shared at their table.

94 **H. Reappointments**

Ms. Munson and Mr. Sibley are both due to be reappointed to the Commission.

96 Selectwoman Theokas said if they cannot attend the next Board of Selectman meeting, it
is possible to reappoint them without their being physically present.

98 **III. Regular Business**

100 **A. Review Minutes – April 7 & 11, 2023**

102 *Ms. Munson moved to approve the minutes from the April 7, 2023 meeting as written.*

104 *Ms. Snyder seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion
passed 5-0-0.*

106 *Ms. Snyder moved to approve the minutes from the April 11, 2023 meeting as written.*

108 *Ms. Munson seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion
passed 5-0-0.*

110 **B. Subcommittee reports**

112 **1. Treasurer's Report**

114 Ms. Neff Ragsdale was absent, so the Treasurer's Report was tabled until next
month.

116 **2. Spring Hill Farm Update**

118 Ms. Snyder reported the spring newsletter was distributed. Her contribution was a
119 recommendation to stay on the trail and keep dogs on leash, as this is a high time for
120 nesting. The least amount of disturbance off trail, the better for wildlife reproduction
purposes.

122 The Eagle Scout kiosk is still being constructed. It will be located at the farmhouse
124 once it is completed and possibly moved later.

126 Ms. Snyder met with the representatives from Moosewood Ecological. They
127 reported the project is progressing nicely. They are focusing on reptiles and
128 amphibians, although they are collecting data on other species as well. They will
soon shift to spring plants and breeding birds and will be installing wildlife cameras.
130 They will provide regular updates to the Conservation Commission.

132 *Ms. Munson moved to pay the invoice that represents the first installment to
Moosewood Ecological for \$3,868.75. Mr. Broadwater seconded the motion. A
134 vote was taken. All were in favor. The motion passed 5-0-0.*

The project to make the farmhouse ADA accessible is still underway.

The Ortins have slots available for their CSA program, which begins next month.

Selectwoman Theokas reported that Ms. Ann Podlipny collected 500 pounds of plastic bags over the past three months and received a Trex® bench in return. She is interested in locating the bench at Spring Hill Farm or Wason Pond. Chairman Chouinard noted there is a restriction regarding locating anything manmade on the easement, although it could be placed near the farmhouse. Ms. Podlipny is on the Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee, so will discuss the location of the bench at the next meeting.

3. Wason Pond Conservation Area

Ms. Snyder reported the Wrangler (former Pounder) will be taking place May 20th.

The trees that fell during the winter storms were scheduled to be taken down this week. However, Selectwoman Theokas reported the road is too wet, so they are waiting for it to dry before doing the work.

Chairman Chouinard said the design for the bridge is preliminary. They are still waiting for a grant. Ms. Snyder noted she and Chairman Chouinard continue to remove debris from under the bridge. Chairman Chouinard added that the water was 3-4" from going over the road during the last heavy rainstorm. A new bridge is needed.

Ms. Snyder noted there is fishing line hanging from the trees near the bridge and is dangerous to wildlife. The trees around the causeway might need to be removed to eliminate this problem. Chairman Chouinard added that Eversource has noted that wet fishing line contacting the wires is a hazard.

Ms. Snyder said there is no confirmed date for treatment of the invasives. There is a communication issue between all parties. She will contact the Rockingham County Conservation District (RCCD) for an update.

Ms. Munson said the pollinator patch was still dormant a couple of weeks ago. She will check on it again.

Chairman Chouinard said there has been some brush-hogging done along the fields, which will facilitate mowing and the treatment of invasives.

4. Easements, Monitoring, and Stewardship

Chairman Chouinard said Mr. Tranquillo continues to make progress. The RCCD is chipping away at the easements and baselines. He and Mr. Broadwater will delineate the boundary of the Penacook Road easement to submit it to the RCCD for a baseline.

5. Trail-Building Grant

Ms. Munson shared information about a grant program for trail building. Attendance at an informational meeting in Concord is required to apply.

6. Potential New Member of Conservation Commission

Chairman Chouinard noted that Mr. Mikael Cejtin is in the audience for the second time. The members hope he will attend the next meeting to qualify for membership on the Commission.

7. Legislative Update

Ms. Snyder shared information regarding a bill that prohibits installing game cameras on land that is not posted. Verbal or written permission will be required from the landowner before a camera can be installed. It has passed the House but was amended and has to go back to the Senate. It will be heard in committee on May 17th. She urged members of the Commission to contact their representatives to voice their support of this bill.

8. New Board of Selectmen Liaison

Ms. Dana Theokas introduced herself as the new liaison from the Board of Selectmen.

V. 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 those of the general community. Ms. Snyder made the motion and Mr. Broadwater seconded the motion. A vote was taken and all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

The cameras were turned off at 7:29 PM.
The meeting room was reopened.

A motion was made and seconded to come out of non-public session. A vote was taken and all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. Return to Regular Meeting

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

VI. Next meeting: May 17, 2023

There will be an out-of-cycle meeting on May 17th at 6:00 p.m. There is a lot of material that needs to be approved, including conservation easements.

222 **VII. Adjourn**

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

226 The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

228 Respectfully submitted,
230 Beth Haggeli, Recording Secretary