

**Town of Chester
Conservation Commission – Business Meeting
August 8, 2023
6:00 p.m.
Approved Minutes**

Broadcast on Channel 6 and streamed on Government (cablecast.tv) – click “Watch Now”

Members present:

Chairman Victor Chouinard
Kristina Snyder
Deb Munson
Kathleen Neff Ragsdale
Rick Sibley
Nick Tranquillo
Mikael Cejtin, Alternate
Eric McGowan, Alternate

Members absent:

Ted Broadwater
Selectwoman Dana Theokas, Liaison

Guests present:

Chester PACT

I. Call to Order

Chairman Chouinard called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

II. New Business/Updates

A. Survey Work

Map 3, Lot 23: Eric Mitchell of Eric C. Mitchell & Associates presented an update on the survey work being done on this parcel. He reported the actual size of this parcel is 18 acres versus 33 acres and discussed how discrepancies in parcel sizes can occur. The Commission also discussed where the Sandown line crosses the property. It needs to be surveyed before a conservation easement can be placed on it.

Ms. Munson moved to approve payment of invoice 13067 for \$3,200 to Eric C. Mitchell & Associates. Mr. Tranquillo seconded the motion. A vote was taken. All were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

40 **North Woods:** Mr. Mitchell said this parcel is closer to 18 acres versus 28 acres. He
42 hopes to present a draft plan of this property at the next meeting. Chairman Chouinard
said this parcel has been the subject of extensive research recently. He suggested Mr.
44 Mitchell cease survey work on this parcel until decisions have been made. Mr. Mitchell
noted that property is often taken by the Town for taxes, often with no indication
where/who it came from.

46 **B. Moosewood Ecological - Spring Hill Farm Update**

Jeff Littleton of Moosewood Ecological presented an update on the Natural Resources
48 Index (NRI) survey being done at Spring Hill Farm. The property supports a variety of
rare and listed species. While there are a few invasive plant species present, he noted the
50 property has rebounded well from the past land use history. Moosewood will continue to
do field surveys in the summer and early fall. This survey is being done in part to provide
52 information to the Rockingham County Conservation District (RCCD) to help them make
decisions regarding activities that can take place at the Farm (i.e., placement of an
54 information kiosk). The Commission discussed the importance of staying on the main
trails at the Farm to avoid disturbing sensitive areas.

56 The Commission requested posters highlighting some of the species/habitats found on the
58 property to display at the Spring Hill Farm Fall Festival and Mr. Littleton agreed to create
these.

60 **C. Map 8, Lot 016 Update**

62 Chairman Chouinard reported the correct legal path for clearing up the title is being
64 researched. The Town will have a deed for this parcel at some point.

66 **D. MELLC, NRI and Open Space Master Plan Update**

68 Mr. Littleton reviewed his appearance at the July 26, 2023, Chester Planning Board
meeting to discuss how the NRI survey can work in alignment with the Master Plan
70 update and the community outreach they will be doing. Mr. Tranquillo said it was very
well received by the Board members and noted they said it is unprecedented for a
72 conservation commission and a planning board to collaborate like this to produce a
Master Plan.

74 **E. Public Outreach and Events**

76 Ms. Snyder updated the Commission on the presentation held at the library the prior
78 week. Unfortunately, the attendance was not as anticipated, although the attendees were
very engaged with the speaker. The Commission discussed the value of putting on events
80 moving forward, if they are not well attended.

82 *Ms. Neff Ragsdale moved to reimburse Mr. Chouinard \$202 for the cost of the*
84 *presentation. Ms. Munson seconded the motion. A vote was taken. All were in favor.*
The motion passed unanimously.

86 The Commission discussed their participation in the Town Fair and the Spring Hill Farm
88 Fall Festival, and what topics they would like to cover. They feel there is a need to get
information out to residents about what the Conservation Commission does.

90 Mr. Tranquillo suggested conducting an edible plant/mushroom walk and the
Commission expressed interest in his researching this. Chairman Chouinard reminded
92 Mr. Tranquillo that this will need to be brought before the TRC for approval.

94 **F. Pomp Road Conservation Easement Revised**

96 Chairman Chouinard reported the Board of Selectmen requires that conservation
easements are reviewed by legal counsel. He updated the Commission on the status of the
98 Pomp Road conservation easement. This was conditionally approved by the Board of
Selectmen.

100 **G. Tentative - Finney Conservation Easement Review and Approval**

102 Chairman Chouinard updated the Commission on the status of the Finney conservation
104 easement.

106 **III. Regular Business**

108 **A. Minutes Approval – July 11, 2023**

110 *Ms. Snyder moved to approved the minutes of the July 11, 2023, meeting as written.*
112 *Mr. Cejtin seconded the motion. A vote was taken. All were in favor, except Mr.*
Tranquillo and Ms. Neff Ragsdale, who abstained. The motion passed 5-0-2.

114 **B. Treasurer's Report**

116 Ms. Neff Ragsdale has not received the bank statements for July. She reported
expenditures for July were \$0, which leaves an available balance of \$1001, which is
118 100% of budget. As there was not a complete report, there was no need for a vote.

120 **C. Spring Hill Farm**

122 Ms. Snyder reported the main topic of discussion at the Spring Hill Farm Advisory
Committee meeting was the Fall Fest on September 23rd. On September 24th, the Derry
124 Trail Riders will have a ride on the property. She reported two dirt bike riders entered the
property at Shepard Home Road and suggested signing and blocking that entrance to
126 motorized vehicles. Chairman Chouinard reported haying is being done when the

equipment works. He noted that the horseback riders there are always extremely polite and follow the rules.

D. Wason Pond Conservation Area

Ms. Neff Ragsdale reported the Wason Pond Wrangler has been proposed for May 11, 2024. The Wason Pond Commission (WPC) tabled approval of this event, as there is no evidence that the group is a non-profit organization. They also have no reckoning where the charitable donations were donated for the recent event. Until there is a complete accounting and proof that it is not a commercial endeavor, they will not approve this event in 2024.

She also updated the Commission on events occurring at Wason Pond, including soccer and Chester Academy cross-country events.

Ms. Snyder reported members of the Conservation Commission visited the property to discuss the debris pile. They decided to spread the debris over the nearby areas where the invasives have been treated to create wildlife habitat and hopefully deter return of the invasives. She invited Commission members to help, if they are interested.

Ms. Snyder said members of the WPC expressed concern that even with the new bridge, there will be issues with the beavers, but they are willing to wait and see. Chairman Chouinard verified that the new bridge should be a big improvement.

E. Easements, Monitoring, and Stewardship

Mr. Tranquillo reported that on January 1, 2024, RCCD will be changing their price structure for production of baseline and monitoring reports. There are currently 22 parcels without these reports. His goal is to have all of these to RCCD before the end of the year, although he realizes this might not be possible.

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

The cameras were turned off at 7:38 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.

170 **V. Return to Regular Meeting**

172 *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.*

174 **VI. Next meeting: September 12, 2023**

176 **VII. Adjourn**

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

180 The meeting was adjourned.

182 Respectfully submitted,
Beth Haggeli, Recording Secretary