

**Town of Chester
Conservation Commission – Business Meeting
September 12, 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 (joined at 6:08 p.m.)

Ted Broadwater

Nick Tranquillo

Selectwoman Dana Theokas, Liaison (joined at 6:08 p.m.)

Members absent:

Mikael Cejtin, Alternate

Eric McGowan, Alternate

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. 78 Raymond Road Easement Changes

Chairman Chouinard reviewed the history of this easement. The deed and the language for the conservation easement were accepted in April 2023 via public hearing for the open space area. New Hampshire Fish & Game expressed concern with the wording in the conservation easement regarding trails and motorized vehicle access. Accordingly, changes were made and reviewed by counsel. The Commission discussed the changes.

Ms. Munson moved to accept the changes as stated to the Appendix B of the conservation easement associated with 78 Raymond Road. Mr. Broadwater seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

B. MELLCC, NRI, and Open Space Master Plan Monthly Payment Approval

42 Moosewood Ecological, LLC, has submitted a contract that covers the work involved in
conducting the town-wide NRI, Open Space Master Plan, public outreach, etc., for
44 \$74,000. Chairman Chouinard requested that the Commission approve 15 monthly
payments of \$4,800. Moosewood will provide monthly status updates and participate in
scheduled events.

46 *Ms. Neff Ragsdale moved to approve 15 payments of \$4,800 to be distributed by Mr.*
48 *Chouinard on a monthly basis to Moosewood Ecological, LLC. Mr. Broadwater*
50 *seconded the motion. A vote was taken. All were in favor. The motion passed*
unanimously.

52 **C. South Woods Survey Update**

54 Chairman Chouinard reported the recordable plat was scheduled to be delivered on
September 8, but has not been received. He visited the site and it appears that corners
56 have been blazed, but he saw no visible painting of the lot lines. The lines seem to fall on
the stone walls. He will contact the surveyor for an update. The Commission discussed
58 the color that the lines should be painted, and agreed on dark red or white.

60 **D. North Woods Survey RFP**

62 Chairman Chouinard sent out RFPs for a survey on the North Woods. After receiving
further information on existing surveys on the parcels in question, he will update and
64 resend the RFPs.

66 **E. Wason Pond Causeway Bridge Funding**

68 Chairman Chouinard updated the Commission on funding for the Wason Pond causeway
bridge. There was a misunderstanding that the Commission would contribute an amount
70 to the construction of the bridge. Mr. Tranquillo said he believed the Commission agreed
to donate toward the preliminary engineering costs.

72 Chairman Chouinard asked the members to consider how much they would like to put
toward the construction of the bridge. The cost of the bridge will be approximately
74 \$300,000. A grant application has been submitted to cover half of this amount. The
Commission discussed other possible sources for funding, including Town departments
76 and commissions.

78 **F. Reimbursements**

80 *Ms. Neff Ragsdale moved to reimburse Ms. Snyder \$155.62 for two banners for tabling*
82 *efforts. Mr. Broadwater seconded the motion. A vote was taken. All were in favor. The*
84 *motion passed 7-0-1, with Ms. Snyder abstaining.*

86 *Mr. Broadwater moved to reimburse Mr. Tranquillo for \$596.33 for publication and*
87 *map printing for tabling efforts. Ms. Munson seconded the motion. A vote was taken.*
88 *All were in favor. The motion passed 8-0-0.*

90 **G. North Woods Donation, Formal Acceptance**

91 Chairman Chouinard reported an anonymous donor offered to fund the ecological
92 inventory of the North Woods. The Commission thanked the donor and will send a
93 formal acknowledgement of the donation.

94 *Ms. Snyder moved that we, the Chester Conservation Commission, accept an*
95 *anonymous donation of approximately \$46,520. This donation is to be used for the*
96 *public purpose of paying for an ecological inventory in the area of town known as the*
97 *North Woods. Ms. Munson seconded the motion. A vote was taken. All were in favor.*
98 *The motion passed 8-0-0.*

100 **H. Public Outreach and Events**

101 Ms. Snyder said the Commission tabled at the Town Fair, but the attendance seemed
102 lower than normal. There were a number of events occurring at the same time in the area.
103 She noted a business card is needed to pass out to interested parties. The information
104 presented was well received. The Commission will also be tabling at the Spring Hill
105 Farm Fall Festival.

108 **III. Regular Business**

110 **A. Minutes Approval – August 8, 2023**

111 *Mr. Tranquillo moved to approved the minutes of the August 8, 2023, meeting as*
112 *written. Ms. Snyder seconded the motion. A vote was taken. The motion passed 7-0-1,*
113 *with Mr. Broadwater abstaining.*

116 **B. Treasurer's Report**

117 Ms. Neff Ragsdale presented the Treasurer's Report for July:

120 *Regular Conservation account:*

121 \$ 1,001.00 starting balance
122 0.00 expenditures
123 1,001.00 ending balance (100% of budget remains)

126 *Savings account:*

127 \$ 165,886.58 starting balance
128 13,648.49 expenditures
129 603.24 credits
130 \$ 152,841.33 ending balance

Conservation Forestry account:

\$ 1,496.50 starting balance

3.76 interest

\$ 1,500.26 ending balance

Lincoln Lane account:

\$ 388.64 starting balance

0.89 interest

\$ 389.53 ending balance

Emerson Conservation Easement:

\$ 290.65 starting balance

00.73 interest

\$ 291.38 ending balance

Conservation Forestry CD:

\$ 41,000.70 starting balance

168.89 interest

\$ 41,169.59 ending balance

Regular Conservation account CD:

\$ 563,759.72 starting balance

2,322.23 interest

\$ 566,081.95 ending balance

Emerson Conservation Easement CD:

\$ 10,250.17 starting balance

42.23 interest

\$ 10,292.40 ending balance

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

C. Spring Hill Farm

Ms. Snyder said the major topic of conversation was the Fall Fest on September 23rd. The Commission will be tabling at the event. Chairman Chouinard removed a dangerous tree on the property. The Ortins extended their CSA for another six weeks. The cows are still on site.

Chairman Chouinard recommended walking the trail around the Lane Road fields and commented on the beauty of the area. He removed some bittersweet that is consuming valuable trees and recommended other Commission members do the same. Mr. Broadwater will research grants for removing invasive plants.

Ms. Snyder shared a brochure created by a member of the Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee about the farm that is being distributed around town.

D. Wason Pond Conservation Area

Ms. Neff Ragsdale reported there are a number of events happening on the property, including a car show, soccer, and Chester Academy cross country meets.

The organizers of the Wason Pond Wrangler have not given the Selectboard an accounting of the funds raised and where they were donated during the event. The Wason Pond Commission (WPC) is reluctant to approve the event occurring next year until this information is obtained.

There are pine trees threatening the garage and caretaker cottage that should be selectively cut. Ms. Snyder said the WPC requested Conservation Commission approval to remove the trees. The Commission agreed preventative removal of the trees is necessary and Chairman Chouinard will visit the property to investigate.

The Commission discussed the caretaker's cottage, and whether wildlife and insects are being poisoned to protect a building that is not being used.

Chairman Chouinard said the baseball/soccer association of Chester would like to erect a shed on the property. He asked them for information regarding the size and desired location, and he will contact RCCD.

The Commission discussed spreading out the brush pile in the area where the invasives were treated, and agreed to meet on October 7 initially to begin the process. RCCD has approved this.

E. Easements, Monitoring, and Stewardship

Mr. Tranquillo had no report, as RCCD does not monitor during the summer months.

He noted that there is no language restricting deer feeders being placed in a conservation easement and suggested it should be added. Chairman Chouinard reviewed an earlier incident, where the Commission agreed not to recommend to the Selectboard that baiting occur on Town-owned property, and the Selectboard denied the request. He said this has set a precedent. Mr. Tranquillo clarified this is not a prohibition on hunting, but the ability to set up deer feeders. Chairman Chouinard suggested bringing the topic to the Selectboard and if they agree, counsel can create language that will be included in easements moving forward. He recommended reviewing state legislative changes and discussing this at the next meeting.

Chairman Chouinard reported four easements were recorded last week.

IV. Strategic Land Protection

Chairman Chouinard had nothing new to report.

VI. Next meeting: October 10, 2023

VII. Adjourn

Mr. Tranquillo moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Broadwater seconded the motion. A vote was taken and all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Haggeli, Recording Secretary