

**Town of Chester
Conservation Commission – Business Meeting
November 14, 2023
6:00 p.m.
Draft Minutes**

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

Members present:

Chairman Victor Chouinard
Kristina Snyder
Deb Munson
Rick Sibley
Ted Broadwater (joined at 6:05 p.m.)
Nick Tranquillo
Mikael Cejtin, Alternate

Members absent:

Kathleen Neff Ragsdale
Eric McGowan, Alternate
Selectwoman Dana Theokas, Liaison

Guests present:

Chester PACT

I. Call to Order

Chairman Chouinard called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. New Business/Updates

A. 2024 Warrant Articles Update

Exeter River Parcels

Several of these parcels are tax takings and go back to 1982. Even though there is a three-year window for tax-taken land to be reclaimed, counsel says this can vary. Chairman Chouinard asked the Commission for permission to get counsel's opinion on the tax takings to see if there might be any difficulties moving forward. He needs to meet with the Board of Selectmen before action is taken on these Town-owned parcels.

North Pond Parcels

Lot 31, Map 5 is where the kiosk is located. The shape of the parcel is derived from the deed, which has numerous exclusions. He noted it is important to be careful about making assumptions regarding lot sizes and locations.

Map 4, Parcel 81

This Town-owned parcel is in the South Woods. Title work and research will need to be done on this parcel, which might not be completed in time for a warrant article this year.

Map 7, Parcel 60

This parcel was included in the North Woods survey RFP and Chairman Chouinard has already spoken to the Board of Selectmen about it. He will send the tax deed to counsel.

Map 7, Parcel 29-1

Chairman Chouinard believes they should be able to move forward on this parcel.

Mr. Tranquillo moved that after Chairman Chouinard speaks with the Board of Selectmen and permission is granted, he proceed with the hiring of counsel to determine the ownership and feasibility of submitting warrant articles for these parcels. Ms. Snyder seconded the motion. A vote was taken. The motion passed unanimously.

B. NHACC Annuals Dues Payment Approval

Ms. Munson moved to pay the annual dues of \$325 to the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions. Mr. Tranquillo seconded the motion. A vote was taken. The motion passed unanimously.

C. Eversource Annual Donation

Chairman Chouinard announced Eversource has sent their annual donation of \$100. He thanked Ms. Munson for her help.

D. NHACC Conference Discussion and Reimbursements

Seven members of the Commission attended the NHACC Conference.

Mr. Tranquillo moved to approve reimbursement for the seven Conservation Commission members who attended the NHACC Annual Conference. Mr. Broadwater seconded the motion. A vote was taken. The motion passed unanimously.

The Commission members who attended the conference shared information on what they learned, including fundraising to purchase land, information on wetlands and wetland permits, trails and wildlife, putting easements on Town forests, solar, beavers, and roadways and climate resilience. The Commission discussed incorporating some of this information when writing a general easement.

Chairman Chouinard and Mr. Tranquillo attended the East Kingston Bond meeting. Chairman Chouinard explained the details of the \$4 million, 20-year bond, including the line of credit that was established to purchase land.

E. Reimbursement, Posters for Spring Hill Farm

84 *Ms. Munson moved to reimburse Mr. Tranquillo \$83.94 for resizing the Moosewood*
86 *Ecological posters to fit the kiosk. Mr. Broadwater seconded the motion. A vote was*
 taken. The motion passed unanimously.

F. Stephanie Voss Invoice Payment Approval

88 Stephanie Voss was hired to validate the work done on Lot 816, part of the Town Forest,
 and the properties on the east side of Ledge Road.

90 *Mr. Tranquillo moved to reimburse the Town \$3,850 for deed research work done by*
92 *Stephanie Voss. Ms. Munson seconded the motion. A vote was taken. All were in*
 favor. The motion passed unanimously.

94 **G. Hire Paralegal to Reconstruct North Pond Parcels Map**

 Chairman Chouinard noted there is no survey for the North Pond parcel Lot 31, Map 5.
96 As the Commission has learned, it is preferable to have title research done before a
 survey is done. The Commission agreed it is wise to have an experienced individual
98 perform this work.

100 *Ms. Munson moved to obtain quotes to hire a paralegal to reconstruct a North Pond*
 parcels map. Mr. Broadwater seconded the motion. A vote was taken. All were in favor.
102 *The motion passed unanimously.*

H. Moosewood Ecological Outreach

104 Mr. Tranquillo discussed the proposed "Chester Through the Seasons" walks to be led by
 the Moosewood Ecological staff. He suggested the first walk be held at the Spring Hill
106 Farm (SHF) Winter Festival and Moosewood agreed. The spring and summer walks
 should be held at Wason Pond, as SHF has sensitive habitats that should be avoided at
108 those times. The fall walk could coincide with the SHF Fall Festival. Chairman
 Chouinard noted the spring and summer walks will need to go to the TRC for approval.
110 Ms. Snyder will present this proposal at the next Wason Pond Commission meeting and
 suggested looping in the Recreation Commission.

112 **I. Host a Meeting of Neighboring Conservation Commissions**

 Mr. Tranquillo said there are regional Conservation Commission gatherings called
114 roundtables. He noted that nature knows no bounds and suggested hosting a meeting of
 representatives from neighboring Conservation Commissions to discuss topics of local
116 interest. Mr. Cejtin spoke with Elaine Chabot, a member of the Derry Conservation
 Commission, who said they used to hold intertown meetings. Ms. Chabot said there used
118 to be a green corridors intertown plan and she would try to find information on this.

The Commission will coordinate this with Moosewood Ecological to incorporate the work they are doing on the NRI.

Mr. Tranquillo said Moosewood Ecological is looking for a summary report of the 2007 Chester NRI, as there is not a copy at the Town Offices. He noted the Chester Planning Board/SNHPC have not scheduled any outreach for the Town Master Plan as of yet.

III. Regular Business

A. Minutes Approval – October 10, 2023

Ms. Munson noted she arrived at 6:07 p.m.

Ms. Munson moved to approve the minutes of the October 10, 2023, meeting as amended. Mr. Broadwater seconded the motion. A vote was taken. All were in favor except Mr. Broadwater, who abstained. The motion passed 6-0-1.

B. Treasurer's Report

In Ms. Neff Ragsdale's absence, Chairman Chouinard presented the Treasurer's Report for October:

Regular Conservation account:

\$ 1,001.00 starting balance
2.43 expenditures
998.57 ending balance, or 99.76% of the budget remaining

Savings account:

\$ 643,265.24 starting balance
568,815.95 debits
545.73 interest earned
\$ 74,995.02 closing balance

Conservation Forestry account:

\$ 1,508.35 starting balance
3.97 interest
\$ 1,512.32 ending balance

Emerson Conservation Easement:

\$ 292.95 starting balance
00.77 interest
\$ 293.72 ending balance

Conservation Forestry CD: (5.35%)

\$ 41,517.68 starting balance
188.65 interest

\$ 41,706.33 ending balance

Emerson Conservation Easement CD: (5.35%)

\$ 10,379.41 starting balance

47.17 interest

\$ 10,426.58 ending balance

Regular Conservation account CD: (5.35%)

\$ 550,000.00 starting balance

2,337.88 interest

\$ 552,337.88 ending balance

Mr. Broadwater moved to approve the June Treasurer's Report as presented. Ms. Snyder the motion. A vote was taken. All were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

C. Spring Hill Farm

Ms. Snyder said a rough draft of the write-up from the Moosewood Ecological survey will tentatively be completed by December. They discussed Winter Fest, which is run by Chester Recreation and takes place at Spring Hill Farm. It will be held in February 2024. There will be a planning meeting on November 20th at 6:00 p.m.

She reported that the Advisory Committee voted on a regulation that dogs should be leashed in the area by Towle Road and Shepard Home Road, due to events occurring on the property and to protect sensitive habitat. A public hearing was held and no members of the public voiced opposition. The Board of Selectmen passed the regulation. At the next SHF meeting, they will discuss implementation and signage. This does not apply to the Lane Road fields.

Mr. Broadwater asked if the signage will indicate where dogs can be off leash. Ms. Snyder noted that while dogs can technically be off leash in most locations, including Class VI roads, she is hesitant to advise that dogs be off leash in any location, due to the detriment to the habitat. The Commission discussed how to address this issue. Snyder invited the public to attend the next SHF meeting and voice their opinion about this topic.

D. Wason Pond Conservation Area

Ms. Snyder reported representatives from the Wason Pond Wrangler attended the meeting and advised the Commission as to how the funds were dispersed. The next Wrangler is May 11, 2024. The Porta Potties have been removed from the property. The brush piles have been redistributed. Chair Chouinard is wrapping the trunks of bigger and select trees with hardware cloth to protect them from the beavers.

Chair Chouinard reported silt, pine needles, and leaves have been cleaned from the main dam at the pond. He noted this debris is collecting at the dam, which facilitates the beavers building their dams. The dam needs to be cleaned regularly.

Chair Chouinard said the Wason Pond Commission (WPC) would like to remove trees that are growing close to the outbuildings that present a danger to the buildings and people. He inspected the trees with WPC Chairman Hadik, contacted the Rockingham County Conservation District (RCCD) for permission, and was told to obtain a NHB check, which he has requested. They will need professional forestry advice.

Mr. Tranquillo said RCCD will be doing an updated mapping of the invasive plants on the property to produce a continuing management plan.

E. Easements, Monitoring, and Stewardship

Mr. Tranquillo reported he has three baseline monitoring estimates from RCCD.

Chair Chouinard reviewed the history of the Penacook Road property. The conservation easement was never properly delimited, so it would be difficult to determine if there are any violations. A survey is needed before RCCD will take on the monitoring. Mr. Tranquillo will table this estimate until this information is received.

Mr. Tranquillo moved to solicit bids to perform a survey of the Penacook Road property. Mr. Broadwater seconded the motion. A vote was taken. All were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

The Sanborn property (Tax Map 7-3) is eight acres surrounded by the Manchester Waterworks land. Mr. Tranquillo obtained a survey from Manchester Waterworks and an estimate from RCCD for \$912.

The RCCD proposal for the South Woods property is \$1,254.

Mr. Tranquillo asked for Mr. Broadwater and Chair Chouinard's help to monitor Mr. Broadwater's and Mr. Chuck Myette's properties. They will share this information with Mr. Tranquillo.

Mr. Broadwater moved to approve payment to RCCD of \$2,166 for the production of baselines for the South Woods and Sanborn parcels. Ms. Snyder seconded the motion. A vote was taken. All were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

F. Solar Working Group

Mr. Broadwater reviewed the timeline of the Solar Working Group. Their mission is to determine if there is a suitable location to install a solar array to offset Chester's municipal electric bill. They have narrowed the options to three suitable properties. RFPs are due back on November 24th. The group will then decide which bidder should be

presented to the Board of Selectmen to put forward a warrant article at the Town Meeting. The group will help the residents understand the pros and cons of a large solar installation.

He described the concept of virtual power plants, which are power sources threaded throughout communities to cut back on the use of large installations of coal, nuclear, and hydro and build a base of solar or wind to generate electricity for local use. He said the Commission should consider if solar farming will be an acceptable use.

IV. Plan Reviews

None

V. Miscellaneous Business

None

VI. 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; (i), Consideration of matters relating to the preparation for and the carrying out of emergency functions, including training to carry out such functions, developed by local or state safety officials that are directly intended to thwart a deliberate act that is intended to result in widespread or severe damage to property or widespread injury or loss of life; and (l), Consideration of legal advice provided by legal counsel, either in writing or orally, to one or more members of the public body, even where legal counsel is not present. Ms. Munson made the motion and Mr. Tranquillo seconded the motion. A vote was taken and all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

The cameras were turned off at 8:02 PM.
The meeting room was reopened.

A motion was made and seconded that the Commission 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.

VIII. Adjourn

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

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The meeting was adjourned.

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Respectfully submitted,

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Beth Hanggeli, Recording Secretary