

**Town of Chester
Conservation Commission – Business Meeting
December 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 (left at 6:56 p.m.)
Nick Tranquillo
Mikael Cejtin, Alternate

Members absent:

Ted Broadwater
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. Annual Budget

The annual budget is due by the end of December. Ms. Neff Ragsdale acknowledged the work the Town Finance Department does in helping to manage the Commission accounts. She reported the CDs are earning 5.3% and the budget for the current year was \$1,001.

Chairman Chouinard explained some line items are kept as placeholders, as most things are funded by the General Conservation Fund. Ms. Neff Ragsdale reviewed the current budget and the Commission discussed ways to reduce it by 1%, as requested. The Commission agreed to present a budget for \$981 to the Town.

42 *Ms. Munson moved that the 2024-25 budget be \$981. Mr. Tranquillo seconded the*
43 *motion. A vote was taken. The motion passed unanimously.*

44 **B. Annual Report**

45 Chairman Chouinard reminded the Commission they agreed to create an annual report for
46 the calendar year as opposed to the fiscal year. The Commission reviewed items that
47 could be included in the report. Chairman Chouinard will share last year's report with the
48 members and they will discuss who will write each section at the next meeting.

C. 2024 Warrant Articles Update and Outreach

50 Chairman Chouinard noted the Commission discussed potential warrant articles at the
51 last meeting and those are still being considered.

52 Mr. Tranquillo shared ideas for outreach activities, including a broadcast on PACT and
53 an informational mailing. Ms. Neff Ragsdale noted that maintaining the Town's rural way
54 of life is of importance to the residents and they might not be aware of the role the
55 Commission plays in doing that. The Commission discussed areas of focus that could be
56 highlighted in outreach materials and events.

58 **D. North Woods, Map 8, Parcel 16 Update**

59 Chairman Chouinard discussed legal approaches to obtaining a clean deed for this
60 property with Attorney Bronstein. Mr. Bronstein concluded that to do this correctly, the
61 probate for the estate the parcel came from needs to be reopened. Chairman Chouinard
62 reiterated this was an honest mistake made by an attorney in 1980 that should be easily
63 fixed. They are not anticipating encountering any legal problems. Mr. Bronstein is
64 engaged in this process.

E. South Woods Survey Update

66 Chairman Chouinard updated the Commission on the status of the South Woods survey.
67 The field work has been done and a preliminary plat completed. He and Ms. Snyder
68 explored the property and noted that the bounds have been flagged and the corners
69 painted. Conservation placards still need to be installed, then a conservation easement can
70 be placed on it and a baseline established.

71 Ms. Snyder reported there is an off-road vehicle trail passing from private property across
72 the South Woods parcel. Chairman Chouinard said the Commission needs to mark
73 conservation properties with "no motorized vehicles" signage.

74 **F. Moosewood Ecological LLC**

75 Mr. Tranquillo reported that Jeff Littleton has requested to be placed on the January 9,
76 2024, agenda. He would like to review the language of a letter that will be sent to

landowners on whose property they intend to conduct fieldwork for the NRI. The fieldwork will not begin until March.

III. Regular Business

A. Minutes Approval – November 14, 2023

Line 195, change IV to VI. Line 33, change tax taxings to tax takings.

Ms. Snyder moved to approve the minutes of the November 14, 2023, meeting as amended. Mr. Tranquillo seconded the motion. A vote was taken. All were in favor except Ms. Ragsdale Neff, who abstained. The motion passed 6-0-1.

B. Treasurer's Report

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

Savings account:

\$ 74,995.02 starting balance
204.09 interest earned
\$ 75,199.11 closing balance

Conservation Forestry account:

\$ 1,512.32 starting balance
4.11 interest
\$ 1,516.43 ending balance

Emerson Conservation Easement:

\$ 293.72 starting balance
00.80 interest
\$ 294.52 ending balance

Conservation Forestry CD: (5.35%)

\$ 41,706.33 starting balance
103.39 interest
\$ 41,899.72 ending balance

Emerson Conservation Easement CD: (5.35%)

\$ 10,426.58 starting balance
45.85 interest
\$ 10,472.43 ending balance

Regular Conservation account CD: (5.35%)

\$ 552,337.88 starting balance
2,428.77 interest
\$ 554,766.65 ending balance

Conservation account CD:

\$ 100,807.76 starting balance

443.28 interest

\$ 101,251.04 ending balance

Ms. Munson moved to accept the November 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 reported the Winter Fest will be held on February 24, 2024, from 12:00 to 5:00 p.m. Moosewood Ecological will conduct a nature walk during the Winter Fest from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m., which she will promote as a separate event. She is working on scheduling the spring and summer nature walks at Wason Pond. The fall nature walk will probably be held at Spring Hill Farm.

Moosewood plan to have a rough draft of the Spring Hill Farm survey completed by the end of December.

Ms. Snyder has ordered signs about dogs being kept on leash on specific trails on the property.

The Chair, Beth Sautter, is stepping down, although she will remain on the Committee.

Chairman Chouinard said a metal detection activity is being coordinated with the Chester Historical Society, where participants pay a fee to detect metal.

D. Wason Pond Conservation Area

Ms. Neff Ragsdale reported the Recreation Department received a commercial enquiry from a kayak rental firm interested in setting up a station at Wason Pond. She said the proposal was not well received by the Wason Pond Commission, as the pond is small. Ms. Snyder has reached out to the Rockingham County Conservation District (RCCD) to find out if this activity would be permitted per the easement. This will be discussed at the next meeting.

She reported that Mr. Dalrymple said the trash bins were filled with trash that contained an out-of-town address. The police will be following up with this individual. Two of the three receptacles will be stored for the winter.

She also noted that Town Administrator Doda has been asked for further information regarding the Ash Street Bridge grant application, which is a good sign.

Ms. Snyder said she and Chairman Chouinard removed debris from under the bridge. The silt at the drain under the dam was also cleaned out. Chairman Chouinard described the silting issue in the pond and the Commission discussed how it should be handled.

She also reported that Chairman Chouinard has been wrapping trees to protect them from the beavers.

E. Easements, Monitoring, and Stewardship

Mr. Tranquillo presented an estimate of \$753 from RCCD to monitor the Jenkins Farm open space. Mr. Cejtin offered to do the monitoring in the future and Mr. Tranquillo will connect him with RCCD. Chairman Chouinard noted there are questions regarding this estimate, as this easement involves a lot of acreage and numerous homeowners. Although it has been surveyed, the bounds of the property have not been marked. The Commission agreed to table this issue until feedback is received from RCCD regarding what this estimate covers.

Mr. Cejtin has been communicating with the Nature Conservancy regarding language for conservation easements. The Commission discussed a timeline for completing this project.

IV. Plan Reviews

Chairman Chouinard reported that Busche Academy is planning to construct a sports building (inflatable dome) on an existing parking lot and are requesting variances from the ZBA. He participated in a site walk and plans to represent the Conservation Commission at the next ZBA meeting. There are existing disturbances to the wetlands. The engineering has not been completed for this project.

The Commission discussed requesting that developers do more to create habitat, control invasives, etc., in exchange for variances.

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; and (c) Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of this board, unless such person requests an open meeting. Ms. Munson made the motion and Mr. Tranquillo seconded the motion. A vote was taken and all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

212 The cameras were turned off at 7:38 PM.
The meeting room was reopened.

214 *A motion was made and seconded that the Commission come out of non-public session.*
216 *A vote was taken and all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.*

VII. Return to Regular Meeting

218 *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

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

The meeting was adjourned.

226 Respectfully submitted,
228 Beth Hanggeli, Recording Secretary