

**Town of Chester
Conservation Commission Meeting
February 13, 2024
6:00 p.m.
Approved Minutes**

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

Members present:

Chair Victor Chouinard
Kristina Snyder
Deb Munson
Ted Broadwater
Nick Tranquillo
Mikael Cejtin, Alternate
Selectwoman Dana Theokas, Liaison (joined at 6:40 p.m.)

Members absent:

Kathleen Neff Ragsdale
Rick Sibley
Eric McGowan, Alternate

Guests present:

Chester PACT

I. Call to Order

Chair Chouinard called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

II. New Business/Updates

A. BestWay Wildlife Control: Chuck Crowe

Mr. Chuck Crowe was not present at the meeting.

B. Ash Street Bridge / Culvert Replacement

Chair Chouinard will refer to this as the Ash Street culvert to differentiate between it and the covered bridge. He reported a 50% match grant on \$480,000 has been received. The grant will reimburse expenditures as they are incurred. He thanked Town Administrator Deb Doda for her hard work on the application.

The cost estimate in July 2023 was \$280,000, with a 15% contingency (\$40,000), for a total of \$320,000. The Town will be responsible for \$160,000. Chair Chouinard noted the

46 cost could fluctuate. The Warrant Article will be written for \$240,000, which he will
47 present at the Town Meeting.

48
49 The Commission discussed how much they would be willing to contribute to this project.
50 Ms. Snyder noted the Wason Pond Commission was appreciative of the Conservation
51 Commission's willingness to contribute. Mr. Tranquillo asked if the funds would be
52 jeopardized if the voters do not pass the Warrant Article and the project is delayed for a
53 year. Chair Chouinard will ask if the grant can be deferred.

54
55 Mr. Broadwater expressed concern that as the budget is challenging this year, the Article
56 might not pass. He also said that this is a safety issue. So, he suggested the Commission
57 pay for the entire cost. They discussed outstanding expenses and if the Commission can
58 afford to pay for the entire cost. Due to outstanding offers on real estate, they agreed to
59 continue discussing priorities in a non-public session and determine an amount to
60 contribute.

61 62 **C. Wason Pond Invasive Plant Management**

63
64 Mr. Tranquillo reported that Arianna at the Rockingham County Conservation District
65 (RCCD) compiled a phased management plan for invasive plants. He shared this
66 information with the Commission.

67
68 Mr. Tranquillo said the Commission has made a considerable investment in the initial
69 treatment of these plants and they need to decide if they wish to commit to this project
70 long term.

71
72 Ms. Snyder noted a management plan would need to be approved by the Wason Pond
73 Commission (WPC) and the Board of Selectmen. She noted some of the WPC members
74 are concerned about the use of specific herbicides, but are otherwise supportive of the
75 project.

76
77 Mr. Cejtin asked about sensitive habitats in other locations. Ms. Munson noted the
78 invasives situation will not improve on any of the Town properties without being
79 addressed.

80
81 Chair Chouinard shared that he is discouraged with the results of both the treated and the
82 mowed areas at Wason Pond. Mr. Tranquillo added Moosewood Ecological
83 recommended developing a planting program to replace the invasives with native plants.
84 Ms. Munson noted areas that were replanted in the past were overcome with invasives.
85 The Commission discussed alternative methods for dealing with invasives, including
86 pulling plants with tools and tractors.

87
88 Chairman Chouinard suggested clearing a small test area, then soliciting volunteers from
89 the community to participate in continued removal. Mr. Broadwater suggested hiring
90 individuals, but Chair Chouinard noted they would need to be insured. Mr. Broadwater

will consult Recreation Director Reishus regarding this, as she hires college students for the summer program.

Ms. Munson recommended having an expert oversee the removal process. Ms. Theokas asked if the Commission would be willing to fund part of the salary of Town employees to do this work. Chair Chouinard said they would need to be properly supervised.

Mr. Tranquillo suggested retreating the treated area, as recommended by RCCD. He would need to obtain a new estimate from RCCD for this.

Ms. Broadwater moved to conditionally approve a second round of invasives treatment for the area treated during the first round, up to \$6,500. Mr. Tranquillo seconded the motion.

Ms. Munson suggested asking RCCD if this approach would be detrimental to the entire project. Mr. Cejtin suggested asking RCCD if there are hybrid options to maximize the effectiveness. Mr. Broadwater noted this approach would limit the amount of chemicals being used. Chair Chouinard recommended obtaining an estimate from RCCD and if it is reasonable, the Commission can meet out of cycle to approve the expenditure and present it to the WPC. The Commission agreed.

The motion was tabled.

D. Moosewood Contract Work Updates

Mr. Tranquillo shared an update from Moosewood Ecological. The Commission discussed scheduling a public information session/forum to present an overview of the project moving forward. Mr. Tranquillo noted this could be done in conjunction with the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission. Ms. Snyder said Chester PACT can record and broadcast the event. Mr. Tranquillo suggested sending a postcard to the residents advertising the event.

Chair Chouinard asked Mr. Tranquillo to obtain more information from Moosewood regarding their expectations for and the format of this event.

E. Business Cards / Banner

Business Cards: The Commission discussed a phrase to put on generic business cards with the seal and the Conservation Commission's email address. The Commission discussed using the term Stewards of, Conserving, and Protecting.

Ms. Theokas moved to add the phrase, "Stewards of Chester's open space and natural resources since 1986," to the Conservation Commission business cards. Ms. Munson seconded the motion. A vote was taken. All were in favor. The motion carried unanimously.

Banner: The Commission agreed a banner is needed for identification at tabling events. Mr. Tranquillo shared potential designs and the Commission agreed on one, with modifications. Chair Chouinard asked Mr. Tranquillo to bring another sample to the Commission.

F. 2024 Warrant Articles

Chair Chouinard reviewed the parcels that will be presented in Warrant Articles at the Town Meeting: North Woods lot (7-60), North Pond parcel (5-31), Exeter River parcel (9-80-1), and Candia Road parcel (7-29-1). He recommended putting off the remaining Exeter River parcels until next year. He and Town Administrator Doda will begin drafting the Articles.

G. Outreach Event Discussion

Ms. Snyder said times are needed for the flyer advertising the Moosewood Ecological nature walks. The time for the walk during the Winter Fest has already been set (12 to 2 p.m.). The other walks are scheduled for April 22, Earth Day at Wason Pond; August 3 at Wason Pond; and September 21, Fall Fest at Spring Hill Farm. The Commission agreed on 10 a.m. to noon on April 22; 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. on August 3; and 12 to 2 p.m. on September 21.

Ms. Snyder said a presentation on Lyme disease is scheduled at the Sandown Public Library on April 13th at 11:00 a.m. She suggested the Commission support this event.

H. Easement Language Update

Chair Chouinard proposed holding a workshop to update the easement language. Mr. Tranquillo noted that boilerplate needs to be created as well. The workshop was scheduled for March 20th at 6:00 p.m. in the Rangeway.

I. Master Plan Kickoff Meeting

Chair Chouinard reported the Master Plan Kickoff Meeting will be held on March 4th from 8:00 to 10:00 a.m. and invited the members to attend.

Ms. Theokas noted it would be interesting to consult with conservation commissions in fully built-out communities that are in a maintenance phase to learn how their strategies differ. She believes Chester's Conservation Commission's mission will transition over the next ten years, in terms of maintaining properties and managing natural areas.

III. Regular Business

A. Treasurer's Report

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

Working budget as of 1/31/24:

\$ 1,001.00 starting balance
836.85 expenses (miscellaneous and printing)
\$ 164.15 balance

Savings account:

\$ 80,000.00 debit in
14,500.00 book transfer debit
14,250.00 current use
14,250.00 current use
\$ 94,250.00 closing balance

Conservation Forestry account:

\$ 1,520.43 starting balance
4.12 interest
\$ 1,524.55 ending balance

Emerson Conservation Easement:

\$ 295.29 starting balance
00.80 interest
\$ 296.09 ending balance

Conservation Forestry CD: (5.35%)

\$ 42,079.86 starting balance
155.30 interest
24.87 interest
\$ 42,260.03 ending balance

Emerson Conservation Easement CD: (5.35%)

\$ 10,520.01 starting balance
38.83 interest
6.17 interest
\$ 10,565.01 ending balance

Regular Conservation account CD: (5.35%)

\$ 557,287.42 starting balance
2,056.77 interest
326.74 interest
\$ 559,670.93 ending balance

Conservation account CD:

\$ 181,770.74 starting balance
597.16 interest

\$ 182,367.90 ending balance

Mr. Broadwater moved to accept the January Treasurer's Report as presented. Mr. Tranquillo seconded the motion. A vote was taken. All were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Spring Hill Farm

Ms. Snyder said the next meeting will be on Monday, February 19th, at 7:00 p.m. There will be a working meeting for the Winter Fest at 6:00 p.m. Winter Fest will be on February 24th.

She reported Chair Chouinard and Ms. Munson joined her on a walk at Spring Hill Farm on a trail that has potential as a fitness trail.

C. Wason Pond Conservation Area

Chair Chouinard noted the tree-cutting project is on hold, as New Hampshire Fish & Game has not given permission. He said any hazardous trees can be removed. Ms. Snyder added the individual responsible for cutting the trees cannot access the area, so all tree removal is on hold.

D. Easements, Monitoring, and Stewardship

Chair Chouinard said RCCD originally provided a boilerplate estimate to monitor Jenkins Farm, which was inaccurate. The Commission agreed to request a new estimate that includes everything. He suggested visiting the Town-owned strip of land behind the homes to review the situation, i.e. are the bounds marked. Mr. Broadwater believes there are infractions and suggested moving forward with this quickly. Ms. Theokas asked if the residents will be notified of this visit and Chair Chouinard agreed this should be done. They will tentatively visit the property on Saturday, February 17.

Ms. Theokas said Building Inspector Bunker sent everyone in open-space developments rules regarding the exterior limitations in October. She will provide the Commission with a copy of this.

IV. Plan Reviews

None

V. Miscellaneous Business

Chair Chouinard reported the Eversource donation has been received.

Chair Chouinard suggested creating a calendar or a to-do list to keep track of tasks.

VI. Non-Public Session

A non-public hearing was scheduled under RSA 91 A:3, II(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. This exemption shall extend to include any application for assistance or tax abatement or waiver of a fee, fine or other levy, if based on inability to pay or poverty of the applicant.

Mr. Broadwater made a motion to go into a non-public session under RSA 91 A:3, II(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. Snyder seconded the motion. A vote was taken. All were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

The Conservation Commission went into non-public session at 8:22 p.m.

The Conservation Commission came out of non-public session.

VII. Adjourn

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

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Hanggeli, Recording Secretary