

**Town of Chester
Conservation Commission
May 11, 2021
7:00 PM
Approved Minutes**

Members present (Remotely):

Chairman Victor Chouinard
Kristina Snyder
Kathleen Neff Ragsdale
Rick Sibley
Deb Munson
Ted Broadwater
Aaron Hume, Alternate

Members absent:

Selectman Chuck Myette, Liaison

Guests:

Conor Madison
Elizabeth LaRocca
Janis Jalbert
Kurt Nelson
Chester PACT

I. Call to Order

Chair Chouinard called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

II. New Business

A. GZA / Eversource - Conor Madison, Elizabeth LaRocca

Mr. Madison presented a conditional use permit application for 2021 work on the existing 391 transmission line. They are proposing to replace one structure off Candia Road. They will be submitting a separate wetlands permit request. It will have minimal, temporary wetland impact. They will be replacing the existing wooden structure with a steel structure, and will utilize an old road and old ATV trail to access the site.

They are not replacing any lines, so there will be no helicopter work or tree clearing; they are not expanding the right of way. They will utilize erosion controls. GZA will be the environmental monitor, so will be out once a week and have daily contact with workers. Construction will be overseen by Mr. Madison. The project will start in June, there will be outages in July, they will attempt to complete it ASAP.

44 The Planning Board requests recommendations from the Conservation Commission.
Chairman Chouinard will contact the Planning Board and let them know the Commission
46 has no issues with this project.

48 **B. Warrant Article 18 Discussion**

This article is regarding the purchase of an OVHR for the Chester Police Department.
50 The purchase comes out of the detail fund, so there is no cost to the taxpayers. With
dumping and erosion issues, Chairman Chouinard believes this is a good expenditure.
52 Ms. Munson asked if motorized patrols were going to be done in the woods, which will
disturb wildlife. She asked if e-bikes had been considered, which would cause less
54 environmental damage, and are more affordable and more portable.

56 Chairman Chouinard said according to Chief Berube, the OHRV is intended to serve
primarily as a deterrent. It will help keep people out of the woods who are doing harm to
58 the environment, i.e. erosion and illegal dumping. Mr. Broadwater said it is important to
be able to access the Class VI roads.

60 Ms. Snyder said the Fish & Game Department is getting calls regarding OHRV issues.
62 They feel that local law enforcement needs to be involved and have the tools to be able to
work with them. People don't believe there are repercussions and don't understand their
64 behavior is destructive. There are concerns regarding the damage being done to the
wetlands, the pollution caused by dumping and discarded gun casings, and safety issues
66 (shooting with no regard to where the guns are aimed). This equipment is a long-term
investment.

68 Chairman Chouinard will speak in favor of this warrant article at the Town Meeting
70 representing the opinion of the Commission, from a conservation perspective.

72 *Ms. Ragsdale made a motion in support of Chairman Chouinard speaking in support
of the warrant article. Mr. Broadwater seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken.
74 Chouinard – aye, Snyder – aye, Munson – aye, Ragsdale – aye, Sibley – aye,
Broadwater – aye, Hume – aye. The motion passed 7-0-0.*

76 **C. Lincoln Lane Fund Update and Note**

78 Chairman Chouinard has been instructed that the Lincoln Lane residents need to spend
the money and then submit the expenses to Chairman Chouinard to verify the
80 expenditure. The Finance Director confirmed that the residents will be reimbursed. The
residents want assurance from the building inspector and the road agent that they will not
82 get pushback.

84 There is still a misunderstanding about the conservation land behind the houses. The
Commission has no enforcement authority nor any authority to grant exceptions to the
86 easement.

D. SNHPC Survey - Deb Munson

Ms. Munson said the SNHPC is seeking information as to any help they can provide to the Town conservation-wise. Ms. Ragsdale said there is an opportunity regarding inspecting existing conservation lands and monitoring easements. There are several categories where it appears they offer this type of help, as well as ideas how to garner community support.

Mr. Hume doesn't need help with the monitoring. Ms. Munson suggested updating the conservation layer on Granite with the new properties, which Mr. Hume said he plans to do.

E. Reappointment - Kathie Ragsdale

Ms. Ragsdale has volunteered to remain on the Conservation Commission and Chairman Chouinard thanked her. She has been asked to remain on the Wason Pond Commission as Conservation Commission representative, and the Conservation Commission agreed.

F. Mill Pine Village Gravel Pit – Proposed Reclamation Plan

Town Planner Hadik has asked for feedback regarding this plan. The Town also has input on how the area should be reclaimed. Ms. Ragsdale suggested attracting pollinators to the property. The proposed plan attempts to create a diverse habitat. The DES does not get involved in issues like this. Chairman Chouinard asked the members to send him suggestions, which he will forward to Mr. Hadik before the end of business tomorrow.

III. Old Business

A. Review Minutes

Approval of the minutes was put off until next month.

B. Subcommittee reports

1. Strategic Land Protection Committee - SLPC (Victor) Ennis Parcel Purchase Completed

There is no news on any of the fronts discussed in last month's non-public session. Easements are needed on these parcels. Easement terminology was built into the deed, which will continue to be done going forward. The Commission will discuss what to do with the Ennis property at the next meeting: it is a unique property, one of the few untouched properties they have.

2. Treasurer's Report – Ms. Ragsdale

Savings account (includes jumbo CD):

\$ 505,823.61 starting balance

51,423.27 debits (include purchase of Ennis property [\$49,900];

rebar caps, Wildlife in Winter program, and easement monitoring costs [\$1,523.27])

130 47.26 interest
 14,216.74 current use - added to account
132 \$ 468,664.34 Ending balance

134 Forestry account:
 \$ 41,242.81 starting balance
136 3.84 interest
 \$ 41,246.65 ending balance

138 Lincoln Lane account:
140 \$ 3,092.56 starting balance
 0.28 interest
142 \$ 3,092.84 ending balance

144 Emerson Conservation Easement:
 \$ 10,229.07 starting balance
146 0.95 interest
 \$ 10,230.02 ending balance

148 Regular account:
150 \$ 259.81 starting balance
 00.0 expenditures (printing
152 \$ 259.81 ending balance (21.65% of budget)

154 *Ms. Snyder moved to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented. Mr.*
156 *Broadwater seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Chouinard – aye,*
 Snyder – aye, Munson – aye, Ragsdale – aye, Sibley – aye, Broadwater – aye,
158 *Hume – aye. The motion passed 7-0-0.*

3. Spring Hill Farm

160 Ms. Snyder reported they were applying for a grant for the work on the barn
 foundation and an AARP grant to help with the farmhouse. They hope to find out by
162 June how the AARP will be able to help. They discussed the work needed on the
 farmhouse. Selectman Myette presented plans to make the first floor of the
164 farmhouse ADA compatible. The estimate to do the work is \$96,200. After they
 receive the AARP's response, they will examine other funding options.

166 The Fall Festival is planned for September 25th.

168 Ms. Munson, Ragsdale, and Snyder are working on the pollinator project and
 growing milkweed seeds.

170 There are cows on Spring Hill Farm, mostly baby calves.
172

The Ortins are back at work in the high tunnel. Hay is growing.

4. Wason Pond Conservation area – Kristina, Kathie

Ms. Ragsdale reported they discussed the issue of unleashed dogs at Wason Pond. Mr. Wright spoke with Chief Berube and obtained a copy of local ordinance, but the WPC members were confused regarding the wording. Mr. Wright would seek clarification from Chief Berube and check with the legal department as it seems to leave open the question of whether voice control is considered control. They will revisit this issue at the next meeting.

The fishing derby is June 5th.

The fields are open for individual and approved group use.

The playground is open.

The design was received for the pavilion and the timber has been cut. Selectman Myette suggested forming an ad hoc committee to spearhead the project, and to get community input and participation as was done with the covered bridge.

The Eagle Scout project to replace the bridge-like structure does not need a wetlands permit. Mr. Brillhart is raising money and going before the Boy Scout Council to get approval.

Ms. Snyder reported that there will be a five-week summer program.

The Wason Pounder was reschedule to May 21st, 2022.

The community center is still closed.

The Wason Pond Facebook page is stagnant, so she contacted Ms. Munson and was added as an admin.

The fishing line receptacles were installed. Fish & Game and the Chester Rod & Gun club were present during the installation. It was covered in the Tri-Town Times and Fish & Game shared it on their Facebook page. Many people are excited and want to know how they can install receptacles. Mark from Fish & Game said they will include the project in their wildlife magazine.

Chairman Chouinard commended the groups involved in the project.

5. Easements, Monitoring and Stewardship – Aaron

Mr. Hume hasn't heard from Hatch, so he is going to complete the Hatch survey and add a note to the attachments.

Regarding the Emerson property, Mr. Hume spoke with Town Planner Hadik and offered his help. He will begin work on the Granite easement project and report to the Commission by the next meeting. The next property will be the Dolloff property.

Chairman Chouinard thanked Mr. Hume for his efforts.

IV. Plan Reviews

There are no plan reviews.

V. Miscellaneous Business

A. Presentations, Legislation – Kristina

Ms. Snyder posted on the conservation page about the second annual dandelion contest,. They are in a friendly competition with Kingston and Durham. The contest will end June 1st. People are looking at dandelions in a different way due to this contest, so it is bringing awareness. Prizes were discussed. There hasn't been a lot of participation yet, but many people seem to wait until the end of the month.

B. Facebook comments

Ms. Munson said there have been comments on the Facebook page about the purchase of the property, hoping the land will not necessarily be open to the public, although there is a trail on the property. The wildlife corridors need to be protected.

Chairman Chouinard said the Commission needs to educate the public as to why conservation is important. They will try to emphasize it in next year's Town Report. Maybe the content on the Facebook page needs to be driven that way. Ms. Snyder said a presence at the Town Fair and other events would help educate the public.

Ms. Snyder made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Munson seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Chouinard – aye, Snyder – aye, Munson – aye, Ragsdale – aye, Sibley – aye, Broadwater – aye, Hume – aye. The motion passed 7-0-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:34 PM.

*Respectfully submitted,
Beth Hanggeli, Recording Secretary*