

Essex Conservation Commission
Town of Essex
29 West Avenue
Essex, CT 06426

MINUTES

Regular Meeting – January 13, 2011

Call to Order

The Essex Conservation Commission conducted their regularly scheduled meeting on January 13, 2011 in Room B of the Essex Town Hall. Members in attendance were Chair, Kay Tucker, MaryAnn Pleva, Doug Demarest, Pam Bernardini, Jeff Lovelace and Goody LeLash. Also in attendance, Stella Beaudoin, Recording Secretary. Richard Helmecki arrived at 7:42 pm.

Ms. Tucker called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m.

Election of Officers

Motion made by MaryAnn Pleva to elect Kay Tucker as Chair of the Conservation Commission.

Motion seconded by Goody LeLash and passed unanimously.

Discussion: Nomination for a Vice Chair was tabled to later in the evening.

Review and Approve the December 9, 2010 Minutes

Recommended changes to the Minutes are noted in italics:

Page 3, Report on Bushy Hill: *Carl Kaufmann*

Under Other: "Mr. Lovelace and Mr. MacWhinney installed the pipe with a baffle." Changed to "*The Commission discussed the installation of the pipe that was done August 14th.*"

Page 5; strike the first sentence of the page which is a replication of the last sentence on Page 4.

Page 3 Oakledge Drive inspection. “*Additional* stakes will be installed during the spring months.”

Motion made by Goody LeLash to approve the December 9, 2010 Minutes as amended.

Motion seconded by Pam Bernardini and passed unanimously.

Old Business

Bushy Hill Preserve Footbridges and Trails

Kay Tucker walked the Bushy Hill Preserve trail abutting the Falls River. Ms. Tucker noted that the Pedestrian foot bridges were in disrepair. The boards were coming off and one board was frayed. Ms. Tucker contacted John McGirr who is in charge of the Boy Scouts and Mr. McGirr indicated that he will look take a look at the bridge and get back to Ms. Tucker to further discuss the repair. The Conservation Commission will reimburse the Boy Scouts for any expenditures surrounding the repair of the footbridge.

Ms. Tucker utilized the Oakledge trail egress and she noted that that trail is well-marked coming out of the park.

Viney Hill Brook Park

MaryAnn Pleva commented on the 5th annual New Year’s day walk. Those in attendance were Jeffrey and Judy Lovelace, MaryAnn Pleva and her son. Those members walked the new path.

Ms. Pleva suggested the possibility of an Arbor Day walk on Friday, April 29th. Ms. Pleva thought that the Essex Tree Committee and the Essex Garden Club might wish to make this a joint walk.

Beaver Issues

Kay Tucker googled “beaver issues” to obtain further information on the beavers which have taken up residence in the Viney Hill Brook Park pond. Ms. Tucker noted that the Department of Environmental Protection site has a good deal of information on beavers.

Ms. Tucker spoke of the installation of the water level control device (WLCD) in the pond at Viney Hill Brook Park and noted that this activity is something that is within the purview of the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission. Mr. Lovelace clarified that the pipe that was installed was not a WLCD.

Ms. Tucker also looked at beaver trappers in Essex, Deep River and Chester. Members discussed the need for such a service. Ms. Tucker noted that the lifecycle of the beaver is such that they will move into an area and they will maintain that area. Their kits are born in late winter and a typical litter size will comprise of 2-6 kits. The beavers hibernate in the coldest of winter. They can forage for the materials needed to build their beaver dam and they also like to chew on car tires. The beavers will eventually create a beaver meadow – they fill the pond and create vegetation diversity. Other wildlife are then drawn to the diverse vegetation and a new species of wildlife will begin to inhabit the area as they feed off of the new life in the pond.

Ms. Tucker noted that the little stream at Viney Hill Brook Park does not feed into the swimming hole. The beavers are damming off the pond and water levels will eventually rise in the Old Quarry pond. Ms. Tucker suggested that the Commission contact the wildlife damage control licensed specialist (by the DEP) and inquire as to cost and method for eradicating the beavers. Ms. Tucker's research also revealed other methods of eradication and it was determined that if left unattended the beavers will create a new landscape which implies a reconfiguration of the water system.

Goody LeLash noted that there has been beaver issues at Millrace.

It was noted that residents abutting the pond have gone to the Selectmen in the past year looking for intervention. Ms. Pleva commented on the necessity of obtaining the help, support and advice from another entity.

Ms. Tucker suggested that a Commission member contact the trappers and obtain the details so that a decision can be made on how to proceed. The DEP partially funded the purchase of the property at Viney Hill Brook Park and as such Ms. Tucker suggested that the DEP be contacted and asked how they wish for the Town to proceed with regard to the beaver issue.

Mr. Lovelace noted that the stalks that the beaver leaves behind will frequently have a very sharp point. For those who walk or jog the trails, such a sharp object in the path of the pedestrian could prove to be a liability to the Town.

Pam Bernardini wondered what the benefits are to having the beavers habitat the area. Ms. Tucker suggested that the Commission members further research that question and alternatives to remedy the situation.

Goody LeLash will contact the trappers and email members with the information and the options. Further discussion will take place at the February, 2011 meeting.

MaryAnn Pleva met the national refuse manager and wondered if he might offer assistance in the beaver eradication. Ms. Pleva will follow up.

Mr. Lovelace reminded members that Joe Budrow, Essex Zoning Enforcement Officer and Wetlands Agent should be apprised of any actions taken toward the beavers. Mr. Lovelace met with Joe Budrow, and Mr. Budrow wants to see the trail going through the wetlands in Viney Hill Brook Park. Mr. Lovelace will walk the trail with Mr. Budrow.

Surveys

Kay Tucker contacted Don Carlson and he stated that he has four or so hours remaining to complete the survey project.

Canfield Meadow Woods

Mr. Helmecki walked into Canfield Meadow Woods from Dennison Road. Mr. Helmecki noted that the big stake is no longer in place. When the ground thaws additional stakes will be installed so as to flag the large rock.

Other

MaryAnn Pleva attended the Hearing on the Preserve. There were quite a few people there and many spoke against the development. The plan has been streamlined to reduce the number of proposed homes to 240, however the golf course remains as a part of this proposed subdivision.

4. New Business

a. Meeting Minutes Transcription Service

Ms. Tucker received an email Memorandum from the office of the First Selectman, Philip J. Miller dated January 3, 2011. The Town of Essex has contracted Transcription Plus, LLC as their transcription provider. Mr. Miller suggested that the board clerks would still attend the commission meetings and set up and monitor the recording of those meetings, however the proceedings from the meeting will then be sent by the board clerk to Transcription Plus via a web server. The Minutes will then be transcribed by this Service. The Service returns the Minutes to the board clerk who will then proof, finalize and submit the Minutes and submit to the Town's web site and to the town clerk for posting. The board clerk will continue to take and create the record of the vote and the legal notice of decision which she posts on the Town's web site and with the town clerk.

The Commission discussed the need for such a service and after a lengthy discussion on the pros and cons of utilizing such a service, it was determined that the current system would remain in place.

Motion made by Maryann Pleva to maintain the current system in place for the recording and transcription of the Minutes by the recording secretary rather than utilizing the proposed services of a transcription company.

Motion seconded by Doug Demarest and passed unanimously.

Discussion: Members determined that there would not be a savings and the process of utilizing this service might be the basis for more confusion.

2011 Budget Projections

Ms. Tucker stated that members should assume that all of the \$11,550 encumbered monies for 2010-2011 will be spent.

The projected numbers for the 2011-2012 budget are as follows:

- Part time payroll is currently allotted at \$3297.
\$1436 has been spent to date.
\$2871 was spent the previous year.
The request for the new fiscal budget year for PT Payroll will be for \$3,000.00.
- Office Supplies is allotted at \$50.00.
The request for the new fiscal budget year for Office Supplies will be for \$50.00.
- Printing Services is allotted at \$1500.00.

The request for the new fiscal budget year for Printing Services will be \$1500.00

- Other Consultants is allotted at \$4,000.

The request for the new fiscal budget year will be for \$2,000 with \$800 toward survey work. Ms. Tucker noted that this lined item would include

- Shirley Malcarne's work on the conservation easement study at \$100.00;
- Wendy Arnold for GIS study continuation \$1500.00;
- Any new mapping required, i.e., consulting fees for re-mapping \$200.00.
- It was suggested that another clearing be opened in Bushy Hill Park. \$2000.00 should also be included for land management; tree cutting and trail blazing;
- Additional mowing at \$1800.00.

The request for the new fiscal budget will be for a total of \$6400.00 for Grounds Maintenance and Repair.

The total budget for 2011-2012 is \$12,950.00.

MaryAnn Pleva will contact Wendy Arnold to discuss the completion of the map work which reflects any new conservation easements received by the Town of Essex. The Commission is also looking for a proposal to add to that map to include the thirteen acres contributed by Herb Clark to Viney Hill Brook Park.

It was noted that as the Town acquires more land, additional maintenance will be necessary

Motion made by Goody LeLash to approve the budget request for 2011-2012.

Motion seconded by MaryAnn Pleva and passed unanimously.

IWWC Report

Goody LeLash, liaison reported on the January 11, 2011 Essex Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission. Ms. LeLash noted that the beaver activity was discussed. Ms. Tucker asked if the corrections she had requested to the IW minutes were read into the record. Ms. LeLash stated that those corrections could not be accepted or considered. Ms. Tucker noted that those IWWC Minutes currently read: "Over time, the Conservation Commission members have deconstructed these barriers and placed the debris nearby" which is inaccurate. Ms. LeLash suggested that Ms. Tucker email Mr. Budrow and ask that he rescind that statement. Ms. LeLash further reported that the IWWC did not have any suggestions on eradicating the beavers.

Correspondence

MaryAnn Pleva displayed a magazine/catalog on the purchase of Kiosks at a reasonable cost.

Election of Officers:

Motion made by MaryAnn Pleva to nominate Richard Helmecki to be the Vice Chair of the Conservation Commission

Motion seconded by Goody LeLash and passed unanimously.

Adjournment

Motion made by Goody Lelash to adjourn.

Motion seconded by Pam Bernardini and passed unanimously.

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Essex Conservation Commission adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Stella C. Beaudoin
Recording Secretary

*The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Essex Conservation Commission is scheduled for February 10, 2011