

Essex Conservation Commission

**Town of Essex
29 West Avenue
Essex, CT 06426**

MINUTES

Regular Meeting

April 14, 2011

Call to Order:

The Essex Conservation Commission conducted their regularly scheduled meeting on April 14, 2011 in Room B of the Essex Town Hall. Members in attendance were Kay Tucker, Rich Helmecki, Doug Demarest, Jeff Lovelace, Pam Bernardini and Goody LeLash. Also in attendance, Stella Beaudoin, Recording Secretary. Absent, MaryAnn Pleva

Ms. Tucker called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Review and Approval of the March 10, 2011 Minutes:

Motion made by Doug Demarest to approve the March 10, 2011 Minutes.

Motion seconded by Goody LeLash and passed unanimously.

Beaver Control and Remediation Presentation

Present Joel Marzi, 21 Westbrook Rd. Centerbrook, John Ackermann, 30 Main Street, Essex, Carol Richardson, 21 Harborview Drive, Essex, CT.

Mr. Ackermann stated that he attended the Board of Selectmen meeting on March 16, 2011. At that meeting the removal of the beavers was discussed. Mr. Ackermann stated that many residents in the audience at that Selectman's meeting were hearing about the issue for the first time. Mr. Ackermann noted that the discussion ended with many questions concerning the remediation efforts being made.

It was noted that over a period of many months, there were numerous conversations among the Conservation Commission members, discussing the alternatives to trapping and killing the beavers. Ms. LeLash stated that she had spoken with a staff person from the CT Department of Environmental Protection.

Mr. Ackermann researched alternatives to trapping and some of the solutions that had been applied elsewhere. Mr. Ackermann put together a presentation re beaver remediation.

Mr. Ackermann presented a booklet entitled "What Good are Beavers?" This is a study that was conducted by Massachusetts wetlands scientists. This team studied 432 sites and by utilizing culvert devices to divert the beavers, had a 97% success rate. Trapping was used in 69 sites with a 16% success rate, as the beavers came back.

While researching beaver remediation, Mr. Ackermann found a company called Beaver Solutions, LLC, Comprehensive Beaver Management Services. Beaver Solutions specializes in resolving human/beaver conflicts. Beaver Solutions has been in business since 1998 and they have resolved 1,000 beaver problems in northeastern United States utilizing flow devices. Mr. Ackermann noted that the information from the CT DEP site indicated that most of their sources cited in the footnotes were from the 1970's and the 1990's. Mr. Ackermann indicated that this booklet offers reference materials that are current.

Mr. Ackermann referenced a portion of this booklet that offered testimonials from different communities who have used the flow devices and Beaver Solutions to relieve their beaver issues.

Mike Callahan of Beaver Solutions sent Mr. Ackermann a proposal in which it is noted that for a fee of \$300 Mr. Callahan will come down and do a site survey, make recommendations and if there is an alternative, Mr. Callahan will explain how to deploy it. Mr. Callahan stated that Beaver Solutions guarantees their work. The usual cost is generally around \$1,000.

Mr. Callahan utilizes a number of different devices to keep the beavers in place while curtailing their activity. Mr. Callahan constructs culverts, and diverts the flow to keep the water at an even level so as to avoid flooding.

Mr. Ackermann asked if the Commission would retain Mr. Callahan's services to come down and do the research. Mr. Ackermann stated that if the Town cannot fund the \$300 initial fee, he indicated that he could come up with a solution. Mr. Ackermann stated that he is here this evening to ask the Commission to review the material and come up with a recommendation to move forward.

Kay Tucker stated that, on behalf of the Conservation Commission, Mr. Ackermann's time and research along with this evening's presentation is greatly appreciated. Ms. Tucker went on to say that the Conservation Commission members have spent a good deal of time researching this issue and a plan for remediation. Ms. Tucker noted that this is our first experience with the beavers. Ms. Tucker noted that the Commission's initial efforts began with the initiation of the baffle system.

Mr. Ackermann's research relayed that in earlier years baffles were deployed without much success. Mr. Ackermann noted that there is a way to create better baffle and water flow designs to protect the culverts and the success rate has gone up dramatically. Beaver Solutions has worked on 1,000 sites and they are constantly trying to find ways to co-exist because of the many reasons that beavers are valued.

Mr. Helmecki asked if the baffle system is installed, will the beavers stop cutting down the trees.

Mr. Ackermann agreed that the installation of the baffle systems would not stop the beavers from cutting down the trees and from coming back. The objective is to try and create a system to allow the beavers to continue to exist where they exist, doing minimal damage to trees. Mr. Ackermann noted that when the beavers hear the sounds of flowing water, this triggers their need to cut down the trees. The current systems which have been created are more efficient, and the maintenance is far less. They are designed to cover a larger perimeter which dissuades the beavers.

Goody LeLash stated that the beavers gnaw because they are rodents and they must gnaw on trees to maintain their teeth. Ms. LeLash indicated that Commission members are looking at the hazards and liabilities that the beavers create, which is a big issue with the Conservation Commission.

Mr. Ackermann stated that he did walk the pond and saw some obvious damage.

Kay Tucker stated that she would like to investigate the initial consultation.

Mr. Ackermann stated that we should to be able to coexist with these animals especially in a Preserve. Mr. Ackermann noted that it is a little frustrating to think that we are looking at more land to take on and if we cannot deal with what moves in and do it in a good way, it is somewhat senseless.

Joel Marzi indicated that trapping remediation works for about one year. They are rodents and they come back. If the beavers cannot hear running water they will not populate the area. The beavers found a spot, and they love the soft birch trees. They have gnawed those trees down to spikes which are potentially dangerous.

Goody LeLash stated that she did extensive research and Ms. LeLash noted that there is a biological capacity and there is a cultural capacity involved. We have met the cultural capacity. We are at capacity in this State. This is almost an urban park.

Jeff Lovelace thanked Mr. Ackermann for his research. Mr. Lovelace stated that the Conservation Commission has done extensive research over the months and Mr. Lovelace stated that he is glad that Mr. Ackermann is on board with the Conservation Commission.

Mr. Ackermann stated that he did look for alternatives seeking a company within the State of Connecticut, however Mr. Callahan has the most successful record of working with the beaver population.

Ms. Tucker stated that the Commission hopes to make progress on this report. Ms. Tucker asked Mr. Ackermann to follow the Conservation Commission agenda for future updates on the beaver issue.

Carol Richmond, 21 Harborview Drive, Essex presented. Ms. Richmond spoke with a gentleman whose uncle owned the quarry. Ms. Richmond indicated that the beavers are not new to the area. They came around two or three years ago. The quarry owner repeatedly blew down the beaver lodges until the beavers became discouraged and never came back.

Ms. Tucker stated that the Conservation Commission has managed the area since 2001. The beavers are new to the area. Ms. Tucker had not seen the beaver lodges in Old Quarry Pond prior to June of this year.

Ms. Richmond noted that she has a dog that swims the pond at Viney Hill Brook Park and she became concerned when she heard that there might be traps in the area.

Mr. Ackermann noted that there was a man fishing at Old Quarry Pond and questioned if that was permitted. Ms. Tucker stated that fishing is permitted.

Kay suggested that Commission members review the pamphlet Mr. Ackermann put together and come prepared to discuss at the May 2011 meeting.

Old Business:

Viney Hill Brook Preserve Trail Report, Clean-up and Scheduling

Mr. Lovelace distributed a proposal from Tom MacWhinney, Mud River Services. There is one acre of barberry to clear and it will take Mr. MacWhinney three days to do it at a cost of \$3,000. Mr. MacWhinney will have to bring in a tractor and other machinery. Mr. MacWhinney would like to remove the Japanese Barberry this month, before it gets too green out in that area.

Mr. Lovelace walked the Boardwalk and Old Quarry Pond area. The clean up will include cutting and removal of trees and the cutting all of the beaver spikes at a cost of \$1,000. This would be one days work.

Mr. Lovelace had a meeting with Joe Budrow, Essex WEO/ZEO and they made a plan to walk the new eleven-acre trail on Tuesday, April 19, 2011. A Wetlands Permit may be needed in conjunction with the removal of the barberry, the clean-up of the trail and the stepping stones which the Commission wishes to put down across the wetland area.

Ms. Tucker stated that the Conservation Commission encumbered \$1,000 for the Barberry clean-up.

Motion made by Pam Bernardini to allot \$3,000 to have Mud River Services remove the Japanese Barberry, contingent on the Essex Wetlands Agent approval.

Motion seconded by Jeff Lovelace and passed unanimously.

\$1,040 has been encumbered to blaze the 13-acre acquisition perimeter. Rich Helmecki stated that he walked the trail and found it to be well marked. Mr. Helmecki commented that while it could use some sprucing up, he noted his opposition to the mechanical brush hog going through the area.

Mr. Lovelace suggested tabling this item and encouraged members to walk the trail before the May 2011 meeting so as to make a determination on how to proceed.

Mr. Helmecki asked members what color markers would be preferred for the area, noting that members might wish to make this an extension of the white trail.

Ms. Tucker asked members to come up with a name for the trail as well.

Jeff Lovelace discussed cleaning up the Broadwalk area. Tom MacWhinney sent a proposal to clean up the area post beaver damage. Tom MacWhinney and Jeff Lovelace walked the area on Monday. Mr. Lovelace asked Mr. Budrow for permission to clean up the area and Mr. Budrow gave the go-ahead. Mr. Lovelace asked Mr. Budrow if the tree in the pond could be removed. Mr. Budrow stated that he would look at it

Motion made by Jeff Lovelace to designate \$1000 for Mud River Services for cleanup of beaver damage around Quarry Pond, machine time, and hand labor. To include cutting damaged trees, removing fallen trees, trimming broad walk near pond, and cutting beaver spike.

Discussion: Noted that Mr. Budrow granted permission to rake away the mud where the baffle is located. Mr. MacWhinney, Mud river Services wishes to begin the process of clearing the Barberry within 30 days. Mr. Lovelace and Mr. Budrow will meet on April 19, 2011 at 11am to look at the new trail.

Motion seconded by Goody LeLash and passed unanimously.

Bushy Hill Preserve

Rich Helmecki purchased boards and nails to repair the bridges at Bushy Hill Preserve. Three of the bridges were cracked and broken through and Mr. Helmecki replaced them. Mr. Helmecki presented a bill for reimbursement.

Motion made by Goody LeLash to reimburse Mr. Helmecki \$56.93 for the award winning photos of Viney Hill Brook Park, the photo album and the purchase of board and nails from Home Depot for the construction of the foot bridges at Bushy Hill Park.

Motion seconded by Pam Bernardini and passed unanimously.

Mr. Helmecki indicated that he noticed signs of beaver activity just past the bridges.

Canfield Meadow Woods

Ms. LeLash stated that she will follow up with Mr. Macgregor.

Other

- Don Carlson has six hours of work left remaining to complete the survey at Viney Hill Brook Park and he will reestablish the pin at Oakledge drive.
- Wording on the maps for Viney Hill Brook Park: In process of obtaining approval from Essex IWWC so that the map can be printed. There is a trail #3 which does not exist and it was suggested that this trail be removed. The area is wet wetlands and a trail could never be established.

Mr. Lovelace commented on the Trail that goes around the swimming pond but it is not reflected on the map. Ms. Tucker indicated that under "precautions" on the map's legend, the area is denoted as "rugged and rough".

"Future trails" will be removed from the code on the current map.

Ms. Tucker asked members to review the map and be prepared at the May meeting to come up with suggestions and additions for discussion.

Mr. Lovelace suggested a pastoral picture of wildflowers for the map pamphlet.

Mr. Helmecki suggested a picture of the pond for the map pamphlet.

New Business:

Doug Demarest presented. Mr. Demarest laminated maps to include Bushy Hill Park. Mr. Demarest stated that if members found the maps useful, he would request permission from First Selectman, Phil Miller to hang the pictures up on the wall in the Town Hall Conference Room B. If Mr. Miller consents, Mr. Demarest will have these laminated maps backed and prepared to hang.

Mr. Demarest requested reimbursement for his expenses of \$25.44 at Staples.

Motion made by Pam Bernardini to reimburse Doug Demarest \$25.44 for his expense to laminate two maps at Staples.

Motion seconded by Jeff Lovelace and passed unanimously.

Kay Tucker contacted Shirley Malcarne and asked her to look into any additional inventory the Conservation Commission may have had this year for open space and conservation easements.

IWWC Report

The IWWC conducted their regularly scheduled meeting on April 12, 2011. Mr. Helmecki and Mr. Lovelace attended. Mr. Helmecki went on record at the IWWC meeting noting that the Conservation Commission approved the footbridge project on Viney Hill Brook Park for the Eagle Scout project. The IWWC questioned the materials used at the base of the bridge, gravel versus concrete and they questioned who was going to supervise the project. The IWWC requested that Eagle Scout Jake Wlochowski be present at the next meeting.

Mr. Demarest indicated that Jake came to Mr. Demarest and he redesigned the footbridge.

The IWWC questioned if there was a 100-year flood, would the bridge break away to allow the flow to pass. They want it to swivel downstream so that water could flow with no obstructions.

The IWWC also discussed the clear-cutting at 141 Saybrook Road, Essex, CT, property owned by Michael Picard. Joseph Budrow issued a Cease and Desist.

Correspondence

A letter dated March 29, 2011 from Sigrun Deman-Morano who is upset about the beaver situation. Ms. LeLash asked if this letter required a response from the Conservation Commission.

It was decided that there will be no response to this letter.

A letter from Karen Burzin expressing disappointment over the beaver remediation.

Ms. Bernardini noted that the residents do not realize how much time and research went into the beaver issue.

Ms. Tucker indicated that the Conservation Commission Minutes which reflect the ongoing beaver-related issues over a period of several months have been consistently posted on the Town of Essex website.

Ms. Tucker asked that it be duly noted that these above referenced letters are the concerns of our residents and the Conservation Commission requests that in the future, residents read the Minutes of all of the Commission meetings. The Conservation Commission investigated alternatives for nine months.

The issue was brought to the attention of the Conservation Commission by the first selectman. Prior to remediation, the abutting neighbors had attempted fruitlessly to do damage control. The Conservation Commission did hire a consultant to research the area and come up with the solution, which was the installation of the water baffle. It did work, however it did not help with the eradication of the beavers. It was noted that there are laws set up to mitigate the damage from the beaver population and that there are State Statutes in place that show what the Conservation Commission did was perfectly legal.

Ms. Tucker reminded members to do their homework from Mr. Ackermann's research and to also research Beaver Solutions and come to the May 2011 meeting ready to discuss.

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 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Stella C. Beaudoin
Recording Secretary

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Essex Conservation Commission will be conducted on May 12, 2011.