



TOWN OF ESSEX
Conservation Commission

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Executive Board

*Kathleen Tucker, Chairman
Jim O'Brien, Vice Chair*

Regular Members

*Richard Helmecki
Tom Soboleski
Elizabeth Stulga*

Regular Member

2 Vacancies

Alternate Member

2 Vacancies

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Essex Conservation Commission held on
Thursday, February 8, 2024, in Room B, at 7:03 pm.**

1. Call to Order and Roll Call: K. Tucker called the meeting to order at 7:03pm.
In attendance: T. Soboleski, E. Stulga, and K. Tucker. Absent/excused: R. Helmecki, J. O'Brien.
Tucker asked for a correction to the February Meeting Agenda as follows: 1. The bottom of the Agenda reads March 13 as the date for the March meeting; the correct date is March 14. T. Soboleski and E. Stulga agreed.
2. Public Comments: Drina Zuvic, an applicant to fill an ECC vacancy. (See New Business A)
3. Review and Approve January 11, 2024 Meeting Minutes: K. Tucker made one correction to the Minutes. Application was made to the **Lower CT River Land Trust**, not to the RiverCog. With a motion by T. Soboleski and a 2nd by E. Stulga, the amended minutes were accepted.
4. A. Old Business: 10 Foster Lane Referral from Planning and Zoning Commission--Removal of Conservation Easements--Continued to March 14, Meeting
- B. Trail reports and management issues in town preserves:
 1. **Bushy Hill Preserve:** T. Soboleski reported on the following:
 - a. He and R. Helmecki examined the Wolf Tree and agreed that there does not appear to be a problem with the tree and the tree is not a threat to anyone walking near it. Soboleski said that Helmecki had talked to Bartlett Tree Company and concluded that nothing needs to be done to the tree.
 - b. Three trees at the parking lot entrance are dead. K. Tucker said to review the estimate previously given by Howard Tree Service and discuss in March.
 - c. The Department of Public Works delivered and spread crushed stone on the parking area. Excellent work by Ryan Welsh and town crew.
 - d. The Blue Trail has a lot of run-off; very difficult to divert it. There were no fallen trees. The meadow looked good.

e. Discussion took place about the bat box and that its positioning should be corrected. To be used, the bat box should be placed on a stake, not high on a tree, and should face East so that the bats get morning sun.

2. **Canfield Meadow Woods**

a. ELT Snow Hike January 20th led by T. Soboleski for the ELT. Soboleski reported that about 14 people attended the hour-long hike and that the snow-covered trail was in good shape.

K. Tucker spoke with a hiker who volunteered to help ECC maintain the trails when a work party is scheduled. ELT is holding A Full Moon Walk on February 24 at 5pm at the Johnson Farm. E. Stulga suggested that ECC should consider leading walks to foster membership. K. Tucker said that, in the past, ECC lead a Beaver walk, and also a New Year's Day walk with a shared tail-gate breakfast, both at Viney Hill Brook Preserve.

b. Other: Soboleski noted that ELT monitors have noticed small tree issues in the Deep River portion of CMW.

3. **Viney Hill Brook Preserve**

a. Inspection scheduled Monday, February 12, noon: K. Tucker reported that she, E. Stulga, and T. Soboleski will meet to evaluate water run-off and seepage on the trails.

b. Installation of Pet Waste Pick-up Signs Weather Permitting: T. Soboleski to purchase 3 stakes and screws at Essex Hardware.

C. Other: K. Tucker presented a history of ECC's involvement with conservation easements. She said that the role of ECC is to: 1. Manage and maintain the 3 town-owned preserves, 2. Make recommendations to other commissions on matters of conservation and development, and 3. Inventory conservation easements. In 2008, the late Essex Town Historian, Don Malcarne, and Shirley Malcarne researched information on conservation easements and early town matters. In 2010, then commissioner, Bill Reichenbach and other members visited properties with conservation easements as well as open space parcels listed on Vision Appraisal and GIS web sites that Wendy Arnold prepared for the Town in 2009. In 2012, the ECC hired a UCONN graduate, who, working from Wendy Arnold's GIS Study, visited, inspected, and photographed 21 properties with conservation easements and restrictions. Copies of this report, "Essex Conservation Commission Easement and Restriction Inventory Assessment," were given to the Town Clerk's Office and to the Essex Library. Tucker said that the commission needs to get a current, working definition of conservation easements and open space, particularly as they pertain to town subdivision regulations. Commissioners need to read the report in the Town Clerk's Office, recorded receipt 7-23-2013. T. Soboleski will further research a list of conservation easements at Town Hall, e.g., Zoning, etc. It was discussed that the list may need to be updated. Summary: ECC should review: 1. A definition of conservation easements and open space particularly related to subdivisions, 2. The Memorandum and information packet prepared by Ms. Duques regarding Conservation Easement 10 Foster Lane, and 3. "Essex Conservation...." described above available in town clerk's office.

Tucker said that Carey Duques, Town of Essex Zoning Enforcement/Inland Wetlands Agent, will present at the ECC March meeting information regarding 10 Foster Lane conservation easements and open space and answer commissioners' questions.

5. New Business

A. Application for ECC Vacancy Received: Drina Zuvic, retired civil engineer, applied to fill a vacancy. T. Soboleski said he worked with Ms. Zuvic at Northeast Utilities and has known her since 1982. Zuvic said she also knows commissioner J. O'Brien. Drina Zuvic's name has been submitted to the 1st Selectman for appointment. Once appointed Ms. Zuvic must be approved at town meeting. Then, if appointed and approved, she will need to be sworn in by town clerk prior to being seated on commission.

6. Financial Report YTD and Proposed Expenditures: Tucker reported the following expenses: 1. \$80 pet waste signs; 2. \$720 Beaver Solutions invoice; Beaver Solutions to inspect the ponds and devices in March or April. 3. \$1500 for phragmite maintenance to All Habitat for Viney Hill Brook. 4. Mosquito treatments, as budgeted for 2023-24, at Bushy Hill.

7. Other: 1. Room B reserved for ECC until further notice. 2. ELT requested an endorsement letter from the ECC as ELT is seeking re-accreditation.

8. Adjournment: With a motion by T. Soboleski, and a 2nd by E. Stulga, the meeting was adjourned at 8:19pm.

Next Scheduled Meeting Thursday, March 14, 2024, 7:00 pm, Room B, Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan K. McCann
ECC Clerk