

TOWN OF ESSEX  
**Conservation Commission**

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29 West Avenue • Essex, Connecticut 06426  
Telephone (860) 767-4340 • FAX (860) 767-8509

**Executive Board**  
*Kathleen Tucker, Chairman*  
*Jeffrey Lovelace, Vice Chairman*

**Regular Members**  
*Richard Helmecki*  
*Adrienne Forrest*  
*Robert Ward*  
*Mark J. Reeves*  
*Frank Hall*

**Alternate Member**  
*Jerri MacMillan*

**Unapproved**

**Minutes**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**Thursday, February 5, 2015 at 7:30 P.M.**  
**Town Hall, 29 West Avenue - Room B**

The Essex Conservation Commission conducted their regular Meeting on February 5, 2015 in the auditorium of the Essex Town Hall.

**Attending Members**

Kay Tucker  
Richard Helmecki  
Adrienne Forrest  
Robert Ward  
Mark Reeves  
Jerri MacMillan

**Absent Members**

Frank Hall  
Jeffrey Lovelace

**1. Call to Order**

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

**2. Old Business:**

**a. Review & Approve 2015-16 Conservation Commission budget as submitted**

Ms. Tucker read into the record a letter which was sent to Kelly Sterner, Essex Deputy Treasurer related to the Commission's 2015/16 fiscal year budget. In her letter, Ms. Tucker outlines the duties and goals of the Conservation Commission along with a break-down of the funding needed to keep the open space preserves that are under the purview of the Commission, safe and well maintained. The budget total for the 2015/16 is \$13,475.

B. Ward referenced verbiage in the letter in which the Commission mentions their intent to "control and monitor water levels." B. Ward questioned why the Commission would spend money to control and monitor water pond levels, noting that it is pointless to monitor or mark the levels as

the water levels are groundwater controlled. B. Ward questioned what measures would be taken to abate the water level if it goes high and he noted that this is something that cannot be controlled.

M. Reeves stated that Robert Doane, P.E. had indicated that there would be no anticipated impact caused by water levels being higher or lower. M. Reeves questioned that if the Commission is already making regular visits to the area to inspect for beaver damming and other obstacles, is this really doing any good.

R. Helmecki stated that R. Doane indicated that we would measure the water levels and monitor so as to maintain the levels. If the levels rise, a diverter would be installed under the Boy Scout Bridge at Viney Hill Brook preserve, which would keep the water at a manageable level.

B. Ward stated that if the beavers dam up the pond, the water level can only rise 6". If you are going to measure something you must have an outcome. Someone will have to go out there once a month and a record will need to be created and the findings recorded.

K. Tucker stated that that is a good idea to keep a record as it will provide a history of this beaver sanctuary project in Viney Hill Brook pond. It will provide a record that the Commission is monitoring the pond and will include all of the notes related to the Commission's findings along with the notes from the December and January Conservation Commission meetings and those suggestions made by the First Selectman. K. Tucker suggested that the Commission monitor the beaver sanctuary project for one year.

K. Tucker stated that she will remove the word "control" and the sentence will read, "monitor the water pond levels."

B. Ward commented on the verbiage to "remove clear or chip beaver gnawed and/or downed trees" noting that the Commission had a discussion in which members agreed that the cut trees were to be left in place.

K. Tucker stated that if the felled trees get to a point where they are obstructing the trails, volunteers will clear the paths.

M. Reeves suggested to amend the verbiage to read "observe and determine the amount of beaver activity, and to mark pond levels, and to keep pathways clear for hikers and trail users."

**MOTION** made by K. Tucker to accept as modified, the letter to K. Sterner related to the 2015/16 budget as prepared by the Commission; **SECONDED** by B. Ward; **Voting In Favor:** R. Helmecki, K. Tucker, A. Forrest, M. Reeves, B. Ward; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None; **Approved:** 5/0/0.

**b. Discuss Town Engineer's Report & Recommendations VHBP**

K. Tucker referenced R. Doane's report and members discussed in detail the recommendations made by R. Doane. K. Tucker suggested that the engineer's report should be shared with the Essex Park and Recreation Commission as they have some oversight of Wollock's Pond.

M. Reeves questioned who has jurisdiction of what areas and who would then maintain the culverts, and suggested that K. Tucker indicated that she would contact Bob Russo and Jim Rawn, Essex Park and Recreation Commission.

K Tucker will write a report and submit to B. Russo and J. Rawn which addresses the findings made by R. Doane with the following recommendations:

- The Eagle Scout outlet requires cleaning and if it becomes problematic, an exclusion fence and an overflow pipe may be installed.
- If beaver activity becomes a problem in the area east of the Eagle Scout bridge, an exclusion fence may be installed to maintain the water level, and if necessary, a gauge will be installed.
- Volunteers will clean the pipe as needed and make a regular, periodic inspection in the area of the Mack property and the CL&P right-of way.
- The twin outlet 18" pipes in the Mud River culvert will be periodically inspected and if necessary, an exclusion fence and an overflow pipe will be installed.
- The twin outlet 18" pipes at Wollock's pond will be periodically inspected and if necessary, an exclusion fence and an overflow pipe will be installed.
- A gauge should be installed at Wollock's Pond.

M. Reeves reported on the installation of PVC gauges noting that the Commission could install the pipe and then look to volunteers to monitor the pipes to check for obstructions, etc. M. Reeves further recommended taking a photograph of one certain spot and monitoring that particular area on a monthly basis. The photographs would provide a useful technique in monitoring. K. Tucker stated that per J. Budrow, Essex Wetlands Enforcement Agent, obtaining an IWWC permit for the installation of the PVC gauges would not be necessary.

K. Tucker presented an invoice in the amount of \$1,750 from R. Doane for services related to his attendance at the December 4, 2014, January 14, 2015 Conservation Commission meeting and the January 17, 2015 site walk. There was a brief discussion as to who is responsible for the payment of this invoice. The recommendation was made by the Board of Selectmen to utilize the services of Robert Doane. K. Tucker will speak with N. Needleman, First Selectman.

### **c. Beaver Data & Updates**

B. Ward reported that he has conducted research on beaver activity and noted that per the U. S. Forest Service, there are roughly 22,000 trees of which 900 dead trees have been felled by both beaver activity and other natural circumstances. The relationship of what the beavers have taken

down and what was already down, is very small. The beavers will eat mostly the plants that live in the water during the spring and summer, and in the fall they will cut trees as a source of food and occasionally, for their projects. The majority of this activity will occur in October and November. They eat roughly a pound and a half of food per day. A cubic foot of wood takes one beaver four weeks to eat.

K. Tucker stated that this year the beaver activity will be monitored.

**d. Trail Reports for Bushy Hill and Canfield Meadow-Woods**

B. Ward reported that he walked the northern portion Canfield Meadow Woods and the trail was in good shape.

R. Helmecki reported that he cross country skied through Viney Hill Brook preserve.

**e. All Habitat Services Contracts**

K. Tucker stated that the Commission has contracted with All Habitat Services for phragmite control.

- The DEEP Application Permit fee of \$350 is typically split with the Park and Recreation Commission.
- Knotweed eradication is \$1,450.
- Tick control treatment which will occur in the spring and fall at Broadwalk and Quarry Pond trail and the right-of-way road past wildflower meadow \$800.
- Mosquito treatment spring and fall \$1,000.

These funds will come out of the current 2014/15 fiscal year budget.

**f. Other**

K. Tucker stated that regarding donations for beaver control tax deductible checks should be sent to K. Sterner and will be deposited directly into an escrow account which will be earmarked as “Beaver Sanctuary Project Viney Hill Brook Park.”

B. Ward stated that a good deal of people who were in the audience at the December 4, 2014 meeting offered monetary help and follow up should be made.

J. MacMillian stated that Paypal is an easy alternative for folks who wish to make donations.

K. Tucker commented on public participation at the Conservation Commission meetings and the necessity to open the meeting for public comment.

M. Reeves suggested that a Section for “Public Comment” be placed on the Agenda.

K. Tucker suggested to table the discussion until F. Hall, who is researching the Commission’s bylaws, has had an opportunity to report to the Commission.

Discussion on New Year's day walk was tabled.

**3. New Business**

There was no new business.

**4. Correspondence**

A letter from Melanie Phoenix related to the December 4, 2014 Conservation Commission surrounding the position taken by Phil Miller and Norman Needleman on the matter of beaver control.

**5. Review and Approve Minutes of the Special Meeting January 14, 2015 and the Minutes of the January 17, 2015 Site-Walk**

K. Tucker tabled review of the December 4, 2014 minutes until Jeff Lovelace is in attendance.

B. Ward suggested to table review and approval of the January 14, 2015 Special Meeting Minutes and the January 17, 2015 Site Walk Minutes.

**6. Adjournment**

**MOTION** made by M. Reeves to adjourn the Regular Meeting at 9:08 pm. to the next regularly scheduled meeting which will be conducted on Thursday, March 5, 2015 at the Essex Town Hall, Room B – second floor, 29 West Avenue: **SECONDED** by R. Helmecki; **Voting In Favor:** R. Helmecki, K. Tucker, A. Forrest, M. Reeves, B. Ward; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None; **Approved:** 5/0/0.

Respectfully submitted,  
Stella C. Beaudoin  
Recording Secretary