

TOWN OF ESSEX
Conservation Commission

29 West Avenue • Essex, Connecticut 06426
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Executive Board

*Kathleen Tucker, Chairman
Jeffrey Lovelace, Vice Chairman
Frank Hall, Secretary*

Regular Members

*Richard Helmecki
Adrienne Forrest
Robert Ward
Mark J. Reeves*

Alternate Member

Jerri MacMillian

Unapproved

Minutes

Regular Meeting

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

The Essex Conservation Commission conducted their Regular Meeting on November 5, 2015 in Room B of the Essex Town Hall.

Attending Members

Kay Tucker
Jeffrey Lovelace
Robert Ward
Mark Reeves
Adrienne Forrest
Richard Helmecki arrived at 7:40 pm

Absent Members

Frank Hall
Jerri MacMillian

Staff: Stella Beaudoin, Recording Secretary

Audience: There were no audience members.

1. Call to Order

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

2. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

3. Review and approve October 1, 2015 Meeting Minutes:

MOTION made by A. Forrest to approve the October 1, 2015 Regular Meeting Minutes with the following amendments: Page 2, Item D: "K Tucker spoke with Beverly Clark regarding the maintenance work her sons have done for the Commission in Viney Hill Brook Preserve". It was noted that Eli Clark is the son of Beverly Clark and Ben Clark is the cousin; Page 4, A. Forrest seconded the motion to adjourn; **SECONDED** by J. Lovelace; **Voting In Favor:** K. Tucker, A. Forrest, J. Lovelace, R. Helmecki; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** M. Reeves. R. Ward; **Approved:** 4/0/2.

4. Old Business:

a. Status of Quarry Pond

J. Lovelace reported that he, M. Reeves and T. MacWhinney visited Quarry Pond on Wednesday, November 4, 2015 and they removed the pipe and baffle extension from the main drain, and utilizing a 24', 2 x 4, they dislodged all the debris in the main drain culvert. T. MacWhinney cleared the beaver dam north of the spillway by the Eagle Scout bridge as well. M. Reeves placed a metal mesh over the pipe and everything was cleared and running freely. M. Reeves stated that because the main drain was packed with mud, roots invaded the pipe and the root balls were creating the obstruction. M. Reeves stated that he scraped most of the roots and debris out of the pipe and it ran clear from that point forward.

F. Hall visited the site twice that same day to check the water flow and as of 4:25 p.m. the beavers had returned to the site. J. Lovelace stated that as of 7:30 a.m. the next morning, Thursday, November 5th, the culvert was completely plugged again and the spillway dam on the north side of the Boy Scout bridge was completely plugged.

Mike Callahan, of Beaver Solutions LLC. arrived on Thursday November 5 at 10:00 am to install his pond leveler system and exclusion fence cage around the main drain area. His work was completed by 4:00 pm. M. Reeves stated that he visited the site this evening at 4:30 p.m. and he noticed a large beaver in the area of the pipe.

It was suggested that going forward, a volunteer should go into the cage and make sure that it is clear of sticks and debris.

K. Tucker suggested that the photos reflecting the completed on-site work should be placed on the Town's website to apprise residents as to the progress.

M. Reeves suggested the placement of a sign at the site reflecting that the structure is part of the pond leveler and an exclusion system to prevent beavers from damming up the drainage facility for the pond.

M. Reeves suggested placing a piece in the local newspaper and also on the Town's website to include a picture and a statement reflecting that this is an exclusion zone preventing beavers from damming the hole. M. Reeves stated that he will get the picture and the statement to N. Needleman, First Selectman with a request for him to forward to the webmaster.

K. Tucker stated that the concrete drain pipe situated in the area where the round-about is accessed was completely dry.

J. Lovelace commented on protection for the surrounding trees from beaver damage and he reported that M. Callahan, Beaver Solutions LLC suggested wiring vs painting the trees as wiring allows the tree room to grow.

A Forrest volunteered to visit the site and identify which trees are to be wired. J. Lovelace stated that a beaver can cut down 200 trees per year. A. Forrest suggested that commissioners put together a work party and go out and locate and identify significant trees.

MOTION made by R. Ward to leave the trees as they are and allow the beavers do what they need to do; **SECONDED** by M. Reeves; **Voting In Favor:** M. Reeves, K. Tucker, A. Forrest, R. Ward; **Opposed:** J. Lovelace; **Abstaining:** R. Helmecki; **Approved:** 4/1/1.

Discussion: R. Helmecki stated that each beaver will reproduce two kits per year.

b. All Trail Reports

R. Ward reported on Canfield Meadow Woods and the progression related to the way that this Preserve has been used. R. Ward stated that during mid-day there is a significant number of older people running on the trails and moving forward he suggested that the Commission give thought to augmenting the trails.

Bushy Hill

No report.

c. Report Viney Hill Brook Park October 11, 2015 work party projects

On October 11, 2015 members met at 8:30am at the passive parking area of Viney Hill Brook Preserve to clear saplings and Autumn Olive in the area of the wildflower meadow, to construct and repair the bog foot bridges in the area of Broadwalk, and to replace the old trail map mailboxes. The work party was successful and all of the commissioners were in attendance. Bog bridges were installed and mail boxes were installed. An additional work party will be needed to remove Autumn Olive and brush along wood fence.

d. Other

K. Tucker reported that the First Selectman has reappointed A. Forrest, J. Lovelace, K. Tucker and J. MacMillian to the Conservation Commission.

K. Tucker reported that two years ago, the Essex Conservation Commission in conjunction with the Deep River Conservation Commission, applied to an environmental review team(ERT) for an evaluation of Canfield Meadow Woods. The ERT is comprised of analysts who possess various areas of expertise and who study and analyze various areas. An environmental analyst was to visit Canfield Meadow Woods and assess various areas of the Preserve. K Tucker reported that Elaine Sych, ERT Coordinator has resigned and Tanner Stevens informed her that the funding has dried up.

5. Presentation

“Should we develop a defining vision and multi-year plan for Essex Conservation Commission and individual Preserves?” An example of what that plan might look like.

R. Ward researched towns from Greenwich to Harwinton and he presented a slide show on his research regarding the Commission’s ongoing discussion related to developing a multi-year plan for the Essex Conservation Commission.

R. Ward commented on the Greenway which was conceived in 1991 and he noted that the Greenway has been very active for land use and they create plans that span over years. The Greenway is the nation’s most ambitious, long-distance urban trail. By connecting existing and planned shared use trails, a continuous, traffic-free route has been formed, serving self-powered users of all abilities and ages. At this time the East Coast Greenway is 2,900 miles long and expands across the east coast from Calais Maine to Key West, Florida. The East Coast Greenway is almost entirely on public right of way, incorporating waterfront esplanades, park paths, abandoned railroad corridors, canal towpaths and pathways along highway corridors. It is designed to accommodate tourists, locals and users of all abilities.

R. Ward stated that as per the CT General Statutes 7-131a-Conservation Commissions, a Conservation Commission may supervise and manage a municipally owned open space or park property upon delegation of such authority by the entity which has supervisory or management responsibilities for such space or property.

R Ward stated that the Conservation Commission has not reviewed the Essex Plan of Conservation and Development which will soon be approved by the Planning Commission. R. Ward stated that the Conservation Commission should have a more proactive role in the Town-owned properties and do more than just manage the open spaces, and he questioned if the Commission should look to developing a work vision or maintain the status quo.

R. Ward looked at thirty or so towns and he noted that each Town's Conservation Commission operates differently. For example, the Town of Greenwich Conservation Commission manages the drinking water for the Town. Hampton separates the assignments, they have created a multi-year plan, and their Conservation Commission works on preservation along with the historical district. The Essex Conservation Commission is charged with managing the three Town properties and makes recommendations on the status of conservation and development

R. Ward asked members to consider what the Commission can consider doing to begin making connections. R. Ward noted that the Essex Land Trust might not have the same goals and objectives as the Conservation Commission and he suggested that the Commissioners give thought to creating a plan; whether the Commission should work on a plan to raise money, to purchase properties, to build greenways. The Commission should look at mission vs. vision statements. The Mission Statement defines what the Commission does, for whom they do it and how they do it. A vision statement defines an organization's behavior in executing the mission statement and identifies what the Commission wishes to achieve and over what time scale. F. Ward created a vision statement for Viney Hill Brook Park which states that "Viney Hill Brook will be an example of recovered natural environment and be the centerpiece of a hiking and biking greenway linking the Preserve in Essex and Saybrook with Main Street in Essex by 2020."

R Ward suggested that the Commission consider if they wish to continue on the same path or if the Commission wishes to move toward diversifying the Commission's purview. Does the Commission want to be a maintenance organization or do they want to build something.

M. Reeves stated that he likes the idea of having a plan and referenced Viney Hill Brook Park for which the Conservation Commission shares a stewardship relationship with Park and Rec Department.

A Forrest stated that she likes the idea of having a plan and would like to see more educational programs set up for school children to benefit by.

R Helmecki stated that the Conservation Commission currently operates day to day and there is no long term plan in place.

R. Ward suggested that the Commissioners create a vision plan. R. Ward stated that the idea is you have a vision, you build it and then you are on the team.

K Tucker stated that it sounds like the Commissioners would like to develop a philosophy or a vision and she suggested that the Commission conduct joint meeting with the Essex Land Trust and the Park and Rec Department.

R Ward suggested that members individually develop their own vision and then come together and formulate a vision.

Members agreed to think about their vision and after the new year gather to discuss the Commission's vision.

6. New Business

a. Review and Approve 2016 Meeting Schedule

MOTION made by M. Reeves to approve 2016 meeting schedule as presented; **SECONDED** by A. Forrest; **Voting In Favor:** K. Tucker, R. Helmecki, R. Ward, A. Forrest, J. Lovelace, M. Reeves; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None; **Approved:** 6/0/0.

b. Appoint Inland Wetlands Liaison

MOTION made by M. Reeves to appoint J. Lovelace as IWWC liaison from Conservation Commission; **SECONDED** by R. Helmecki; **Voting In Favor:** K. Tucker, R. Helmecki, R. Ward, A. Forrest, J. Lovelace, M. Reeves; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None; **Approved:** 6/0/0.

c. Discuss December Meeting

The Commission will conduct special meeting on Monday, December 1, 2015 and the December 3, 2015 meeting is cancelled.

d. Other

K. Tucker received an email from Ben Kingsley inquiring if there were any projects that the Commission would like to assign to an Eagle Scout.

K. Tucker asked members to reserve time in their schedules on January 1, 2016 at 10:00 am for the 10th annual New Year's day hike.

7. Financial Report and Expenditures

K. Tucker commented on three invoices totaling \$1800 from Clark's Custom Services; there were six mowings this summer in Viney Hill Brook Park. J. Lovelace stated that the Commission previously made a decision to mow more frequently as the Commission no longer authorizes the use of pesticide application for tick control. Frequent mowing will ensure shorter grass, which will detour the ticks. Also submitted, two invoices for \$400 each from Clark's Custom Services for Bushy Hill Brook Preserve.

MOTION made by M. Reeves to approve the \$2,400 bill from Clark's Custom Services for ten mowings, at Bushy Hill Brook and Viney Hill Brook Preserve; **SECONDED** by R. Ward; **Voting In Favor:** K. Tucker, R. Ward, R. Helmecki, J. Lovelace, M. Reeves and A. Forrest; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None; **Approved:** 6/0/0.

MOTION made by R. Ward that moving forward, to obtain an estimate from Clark's Custom Services for any future mowing or maintenance, before the work is performed; **SECONDED** by M. Reeves; **Voting In Favor:** K. Tucker, R. Ward, R. Helmecki, J. Lovelace, M. Reeves and A. Forrest; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None; **Approved:** 6/0/0.

MOTION made by M. Reeves to approve the estimate in the amount of \$525 for brush clearing and removing and chipping of the heavy growth around the wooden fence in Viney Hill Brook Park; **SECONDED** by A. Forrest; **Voting In Favor:** K. Tucker, R. Ward, R. Helmecki, J. Lovelace, M. Reeves and A. Forrest; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None; **Approved:** 6/0/0.

MOTION made by M. Reeves to take the community raised escrow account funds and pay for the work performed for the installation of the pond leveler beaver solution system; **SECONDED** by R. Ward; **Voting In Favor:** K. Tucker, R. Ward, R. Helmecki, J. Lovelace, M. Reeves and A. Forrest; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None; **Approved:** 6/0/0.

8. Adjournment

MOTION made by R. Ward to adjourn at 9:29pm to a special meeting which will be conducted on December 1, 2015 at 7:30pm, Essex Town Hall, Conference Room A, 29 West Avenue, Essex, CT; **SECONDED** by M. Reeves; **Voting In Favor:** K. Tucker, R. Ward, M. Reeves, R. Helmecki, J. Lovelace and A. Forrest; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None; **Approved:** 6/0/0.

Respectfully submitted,

Stella C. Beaudoin
Recording Secretary