

TOWN OF ESSEX
Conservation Commission

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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, July 13, 2017 at 7:30 P.M.**

The Essex Conservation Commission conducted their regularly scheduled meeting on July 13, 2017 in Room B of the Essex Town Hall.

Attending Members

Kay Tucker
Richard Helmecki
Jeffrey Lovelace
Robert Ward
Frank Hall
Mark Reeves
Adrienne Forrest
Jerri MacMillian, Alternate
Jim O'Brien, Alternate

Absent Members

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.

Seated for the meeting were K. Tucker, R Helmecki, J Lovelace, F Hall, A Forrest, M Reeves, R Ward.

2. Public Comment

Kay Tucker welcomed Jim O'Brien to the Commission. Mr. O'Brien indicated that he moved to Essex from Killingworth in the past two years and while a resident of Killingworth, J O'Brien was seated on the Killingworth Planning and Zoning Commission and on the Housing Partnership.

3. Financial Report Fiscal Year End 2016-2017

A. Discuss and Designate Funds for Fiscal 2017-2018 Services and Projects

K Tucker reported on the Year End Fiscal 2016-17 budget and projected expenses.

4. Old Business to include:

A. Viney Hill Brook Preserve

1. Report Site Walk and Maintenance Broadwalk Trail

M Reeves reported on a July 2, 2017 site walk conducted by the Conservation Commission where he noted, members encountered the deepest water of the year as a result of beaver activity at the Broadwalk intersection.

M Reeves stated that members also encountered continued beaver activity at the newly created pond site resulting in the overflow of water to the adjacent Quarry Pond, and he reported that the pathway was immersed in water. Members spent a considerable amount of time clearing and breaching the beaver dams. M Reeves stated that there were two large beavers working in the new pond to dam it as members were dislodging the debris, etc. M Reeves reported that at this time, it appears that the beaver activity at the new pond is very limited and there is left remaining a small area of mud and debris which needs to be cleared in order to restore Broadwalk to its previous state. M Reeves noted that remediation of the site is necessary in order to reestablish the right-of-way road culvert that is in the shared pond of D. Robida and the Town of Essex.

2. Remediation Right of Way Road Culvert

F Hall distributed a draft of a proposal of the IWWC Permit application for the proposed work to be done by Beaver Solutions, LLC for remediation to the blockage of the culvert situated below right of-way Road, Cedar Grove Terrace.

J Lovelace reported that at the July 9, 2017 IWWC meeting, he requested administrative approval and waiver of fees associated with the submission of application for the proposed work to be done by Beaver Solutions.

K Tucker reported that the beavers are coming up the culvert, under the right-of-way road and are accessing the Robida property from the Quarry Pond loop. Eight to ten feet into the culvert the existing pipe has rusted and the beavers are travelling under the pipe to access the other end of the pond.

M Reeves suggested the placement of a screen in the downhill side of the pipe to prohibit the beavers from getting in or alternatively, run the pipe to the downhill side which will bypass the water rusted area.

F Hall reported that he was at Quarry Pond today and he noted that Clark's Custom Services has mowed Broadwalk to the point where it becomes muddy, and they did the same work on the other side of the trail, all the way to Wollock Pond and they cleared the trails all the way around Quarry Pond.

K Tucker reported that there is barely a trickle of water under the Scout Bridge, however there remains an inch of standing water at this time.

J Lovelace recommended that Mike Callahan, Beaver Solutions check the inlet of this pipe. J Lovelace stated that there is also a concern that the spillway is not working as there is 8 inches of water, and the pond is 8 inches higher than it was designed to be.

F Hall reported that there were Lilly pads were growing in the area around the exclusion fence.

R Ward reported on the proposed construction and installation of the beaver sanctuary sign for educational purposes. The Rockfall Foundation is an organization in Middletown that funds environmental projects in the lower valley.

MOTION by M Reeves to place on the August 10, 2017 Conservation Commission agenda Application to Rockfall Foundation for grant assistance for the purpose of funding the construction and installation of educational signage for the beaver sanctuary at Viney Hill Brook Park; **SECONDED** by R Ward; **Voting in Favor:** K. Tucker, R Helmecki, J Lovelace, F Hall, A Forrest, M Reeves, R Ward; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None; **Approved:** 7/0/0.

B. Bushy Hill Preserve

K Tucker reported that she asked Clark's Custom Services to refrain from utilizing a blow pack to clear the paths.

C. Canfield-Meadow Woods Preserve

No report.

D. Other

K Tucker reported that she spoke with Lisa Fasulo, Health Director who stated that the water within the Viney Hill Brook Preserve is tested weekly in the summer months and the most recent test revealed that there were 20 counts per part of E. Coli per 100 millimeters which is an acceptable level. E. coli levels at designated swimming beaches should not exceed 88 per 100 milliliter (mL) in any one sample, or exceed a three- sample average over a 60-day period of 47/100 mL. L Fasulo stated that satisfactory levels would yield a count of under 235 and it was noted that in August of 2016 the count was 276, and the beach was closed.

5. New Business to include:

A. Restoration of Broadwalk Trail VHBP

Flooding of and Remediation for Broadwalk - M Reeves talked about water runoff coming off the slopes and flowing from Broadwalk, then streaming down to the pond. M Reeves stated that a permanent solution that is ecologically sound and financially prudent must be agreed upon. At the intersection of the two walkways, the mini pond feeds across the path and drops into Quarry Pond. M Reeves suggested the excavation of a trench 2 feet deep and 4 feet wide from the culvert installed just past the pond, and fill with trap rock. M Reeves stated that such a trench with rip rap will carry water and there is no way that the critters will block this prototype. M Reeves stated that he has a small John Deere with a bucket that he will use to perform this work.

J Lovelace suggested that M Reeves write up the proposal and present to the Inland Wetlands Commission. J Lovelace further recommended that M. Reeves discuss this plan for remediation with the Town Engineer.

MOTION made by J Lovelace that the Conservation Commission authorize M Reeves to contact Robert Doane, Town Engineer to discuss remediation ideas of the Broadwalk Blue Trail junction problem and report back to the Commission at the August 10, 2017 meeting; **SECONDED** by F Hall; **Voting in Favor:** K. Tucker, R Helmecki, J Lovelace, F Hall, A Forrest, M Reeves, R Ward; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None; **Approved:** 7/0/0.

B. Other

K Tucker distributed photos and a map of plantings at Viney Hill Brook Park which reflect the evolution and improvement of the trails accomplished by the Conservation Commission, within the Town's preserves.

M Reeves created a draft proposal for goals within Viney Hill Brook Park. M Reeves stated that the beavers have created dramatic changes within the preserve and the Commission is looking to establish a plan moving forward as to how to co-exist with the beavers. M Reeves indicated that it is incumbent upon those who wish to preserve the beavers and create a beaver sanctuary to step up and provide funding in order to create safe passage, funding the maintenance of the park and management of the beaver situation. M Reeves noted that the routine mowing has been delayed and the beavers have created quite a mess and created a situation where future judgement must be made as to how much will be cleaned up or if certain portions of the park will be let go to the beavers. M Reeves suggested that the Commission address the changing situation with the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance and inform that additional funding is necessary for beaver management to include funds for the hiring of personnel to handle remediation and provide the maintenance. M Reeves further recommended that the Commission be placed on an upcoming IWWC Agenda to discuss the need for remediation and receive advice on how to proceed, whether by formal application to the IWWC or administrative approval from the WEO.

K Tucker stated that some of the associated expenses would include the possible expenditure of revising the trail maps and keeping ahead of remediation of the trails that have been affected by the beaver activity.

A Forrest discussed how far Commission wishes to take the effects of the beaver situation in Viney Hill Brook Preserve to include what the future vision is for the park as related to future use by residents of Essex and what is it worth to the Town to maintain the Preserve in co-existence with the beavers. A Forrest noted that the Preserve was created and purchased with specific funding and use for human activity. There are 30 acres for active recreation and the remainder of the land is designated for passive.

K Tucker stated that the State of CT funded \$173,000 for the acquisition of Viney Hill Brook Park and the Commission has to date expended \$6,000 on keeping the beavers contained.

J Lovelace stated that Essex Meadows has received IWWC permitting for the installation of the beaver control device and the Town is funding the installation of the same device adjacent to D. Robida's property and there is a likelihood that another device will be needed at the Eagle Scout bridge.

A Forrest questioned if fund raising letters should be sent out to the residents.

R Ward suggested that the Commission decide what the park should be, which will decide what the actions of the Commission are to be.

J MacMillian stated that prior to 3 years ago, Viney Hill Brook Preserve was not intended as a beaver sanctuary and now it is and she questioned where the funding will come from in order to maintain the Preserve as the beavers change the topography.

F Hall stated that it is the task of the Conservation Commission to preserve nature and the Commission cannot be selective in what it is that we preserve.

J Lovelace stated that it is in the Conservation Commission's Charter is to manage the property and that property is not being managed by the Commission at this time, A balance needs to be created between the beavers and the trees. The Commission represents the Town and the residents of the Town.

R Ward suggested that members think about bringing in a mediator to facilitate a discussion on what the Preserve/Park should be.

M Reeves stated that the purpose of his letter was to start a dialog and perhaps dedicate a meeting to a round table discussion about personal vision of what the park is.

K Tucker concluded that the Commission will move forward with discretionary funding and await the opinion of the Town Engineer.

6. Approval of Minutes

MOTION made by M Reeves to move Review of the Minutes to the first agenda item, and to table approval of the June 8, 2017 Regular Meeting Minutes as presented; **SECONDED** by R Helmecki; **Voting in Favor:** K. Tucker, R Helmecki, J Lovelace, F Hall, A Forrest, M Reeves, R Ward; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None; **Approved:** 7/0/0.

7. Inland/Wetlands Report

J Lovelace reported that First Selectman approved funds for the installation of an Exclusion fence at Viney Hill Brook Preserve and the IWWC granted permission for administrative approval for the installation.

9. Adjournment

MOTION made by A Forrest to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 pm until the next regularly scheduled meeting which will be conducted on August 10, 2017 at 7:30pm, Essex Town Hall, Conference Room B, 29 West Avenue, Essex, CT; **SECONDED** by F Hall; **Voting in Favor:** K. Tucker, R Helmecki, J Lovelace, F Hall, A Forrest, M Reeves, R Ward; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None; **Approved:** 7/0/0.

Respectfully submitted,

Stella C. Beaudoin
Recording Secretary