



TOWN OF ESSEX
Conservation Commission

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Executive Board

Kathleen Tucker, Chairman
Jeffrey Lovelace, Vice Chairman
Adrienne Forrest, Secretary

Regular Members

Frank Hall
Richard Helmecki
Mark J. Reeves
Jim O'Brien

Alternate Member

Roger Field
Jacob Wlochowski

Unapproved

Minutes Regular Meeting
Thursday, September 12, 2019 at 7:30 P.M.

The Essex Conservation Commission conducted their regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday, September 12, 2019 in Room B of the Essex Town Hall.

Attending Members

K Tucker
A Forrest
J Lovelace
J O'Brien
M Reeves
R Helmecki
R Field, Alternate seated for F Hall
J Wlochowski, Alternate

Absent Members

F Hall

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, A Forrest, J Lovelace, M Reeves, J O'Brien, R Helmecki, and R Field.

2. Public Comment

No public comment

3. Review and Approve August 8, 2019 Meeting Minutes

MOTION made by J O'Brien to approve the minutes of the August 8, 2019 meeting with no changes. **SECONDED** by R Field; **Voting in Favor:** K Tucker, A Forrest, J Lovelace, J O'Brien, M Reeves, R Helmecki, R Field; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None; **Approved:** 7/0/0. **Discussion:** No further discussion.

MOTION made by J O'Brien to add **F. Other** to the agenda. **SECONDED** by M Reeves; **Voting in Favor:** K Tucker, A Forrest, J Lovelace, J O'Brien, M Reeves, R Helmecki, R Field; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None; **Approved:** 7/0/0. **Discussion:** No further discussion.

4. Old Business to include:
Discuss and prioritize FY Projects

R Field created a Project List of things the Conservation Commission would like to accomplish over this fiscal year. It now needs to be put in order of priority. We would like to have enough information to be able to figure the cost for each project at the October meeting. The Project List is fluid; items may be added or deleted.

M Reeves suggested commissioners meet at Bushy Hill Preserve to look at what would be needed to resurface the Bushy Hill entrance. As the Commission was planning on scheduling a work-party, it was decided to combine a visit to Bushy Hill, look at the graveled entrance, take measurements, and mark the area needing improvements. It was also suggested the commissioners look at the trail beyond the parking area where sections of the trail have become too muddy. The commissioners agreed to meet at Bushy Hill on Sunday, September 22, at 8:30 AM then reassemble at Viney Hill Brook Preserve for additional maintenance work.

R Helmecki mentioned that one of the three bridges at Bushy Hill is in need of repair. As the bridges were Eagle Scout past projects of the past, J Wlochowski mentioned that once Eagle Scouts have taken on a project, they are expected to maintain them. J Wlochowski said he would look into getting the Scouts back to do whatever work is needed for the bridges. Helmecki also stated that a bridge has been moved into the Falls River and needs to be removed while the riverbed is dry.

At Viney Hill Brook, several other projects need to be prioritized. It was suggested we get the Eagle Scouts involved with elevating the Broadwalk bog bridge and repairing the ruts left in the trails by the bikers who trespassed earlier. There is also a need to reseed the wildflower meadow with "Prairie Seeds" as the meadow is looking a little thin. When the projects are more clearly defined, they can be presented to the Scouts.

The work party at Viney Hill Brook will involve spraying what's left of the Japanese Knotweed. J Lovelace reported he saw less Japanese Knotweed than he's ever seen so probably just a few plants are all that need spot spraying. The spraying has worked very well. It's even taken out some of the poison ivy.

The pond leveler is expected to take only about a half hour to clear of the sticks and mud which have accumulated around it.

M Reeves stated that he has the new Viney Hill Brook sign and all the parts required for installation at the passive parking area. Reeves and Lovelace will coordinate a time to complete the project.

Trail Reports:

1. Bushy Hill Preserve

R Helmecki reported All Habitat sprayed the trails on September 9. The trails were in good shape except the one going toward the big Wolf tree needs to be cleaned up a bit more. There is bayberry with thorns encroaching on the trails so the trails need to be made wider by cutting back the bayberry. Ely Clark had cleaned up some of the trails but missed the one to the Wolf tree.

K Tucker and R Helmecki cut back some Japanese Knotweed in Bushy Hill. She reported the plants had grown taller than she is and the stalks were large and hollow. They should be sprayed when the work -party is there.

2. Canfield Meadow Woods

R Field reported the trails are in good shape. A small tree had fallen but subsequently removed so all is well. The Land Trust is planning to replace information signs as the current ones are washed out and hard to read.

3. Viney Hill Brook

J Lovelace reported the blue trail is in good shape. The pond leveler looks good and is functioning well. Broadwalk has been mowed to the intersection and the area is passable. When walking toward Tucker Pond the grass is high but not blocking the trail. Beavers continue to work on the smaller pond where the yellow trail used to be. The dam is bigger than last month and they've cut down a couple more trees. It's drier up there and the trails are in good shape.

The Wildflower Meadow should be cut after first frost. The Japanese Knotweed is almost gone. Lovelace also reported empty map boxes; A Forrest said she would replenish the boxes.

K Tucker reported the bog bridges on the blue trail are great—solid and in good shape and complimented Lovelace, Helmecki and Field on their work in repositioning the bridges earlier in the spring. Ely Clark has one more mowing to do this month.

4. Schedule preserve work party

A work- party has been scheduled for Sunday, September 22, 8:30 a.m. Everyone will meet at the Bushy Hill Preserve first to measure and mark the entrance so the resurfacing can be planned and the cost calculated. From there everyone will go to Viney Hill Brook to deal with projects such as clearing the pond leveler of debris and possibly repairing the ruts left by bicyclists.

5. Review and Approve 2018-2019 Town Report

MOTION was made by M Reeves to approve the Town Report as written; **SECONDED** by J O'Brien; **Voting in favor:** K Tucker, A Forrest, J Lovelace, J O'Brien, M Reeves, R Helmecki, R Field; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None; **Approved:** 7/0/0. **Discussion:** All agreed it was a job well done.

6. Discuss need to correct Conservation Commission information on Town Website

Upon reviewing the Conservation Commission listing on the town's website, a couple of updates are needed: A Forrest, Secretary and Jacob Wlochowski, not Jason. The conservation properties show old maps for down-loading, the new GPS maps need to be added. J Lovelace said he would make sure the maps are added.

7. Other

J Wlochowski asked how regulations regarding the Conservation land are changed. He was specifically asking about riding bikes which are not allowed in any of the Conservation land. Because the parks are funded by DEEP, the Commission has to abide by the laws which the State passed. The Preserve off of Rte. 153 in Essex, Old Saybrook, and Westbrook, however, allows biking.

J Wlochowski also expressed an interest in becoming a member of the Essex Land Trust so will discuss with the commissioners who are members how he can join.

New Business

K Tucker said F Hall's and J Lovelace's terms on the Conservation Commission expire after the November meeting so asked if she should ask the First Selectman whether to reappoint them. J Lovelace said he would let her know; he is serving on other commissions so may decide, after many years, to leave the Conservation Commission.

5. Financial Report

J O'Brien will try setting up an easier format for the financial reports to make them more understandable. He will coordinate with K Tucker on a template.

MOTION was made by J O'Brien to spend \$7.18 for Bushy Hill reflectors this fiscal year; **SECONDED** by J Lovelace; **Voting in favor:** K Tucker, A Forrest, J Lovelace, J O'Brien, M Reeves, R Helmecki, R Field; **Opposed:** None; **Approved:** 7//0/0. **Discussion:** No further discussion.

6. Adjournment

MOTION made by M Reeves to adjourn the meeting at 9:12 p.m. until the October 10, 2019 regularly scheduled meeting at 7:30 p.m., Essex Town Hall, Conference Room B, 29 West Avenue, Essex, CT; **SECONDED** by J O'Brien; **Voting in favor:** K Tucker, A Forrest, J Lovelace, J O'Brien, M Reeves, R Helmecki, R Field; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None; **Approved:** 7/0/0. **Discussion:** No further discussion.

Respectfully submitted,

Adrienne Forrest
Secretary