



TOWN OF ESSEX
Conservation Commission

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

Executive Board

Kathleen Tucker, Chairman
Jeffrey Lovelace, Vice Chair

Regular Members

Frank Hall
Richard Helmecki
Jim O'Brien
Mark Reeves
Vacancy

Alternate Member

Roger Field
Vacancy

Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes

January 13, 2022, Room A, 7:00 pm

1. Call to Order and Roll Call. K. Tucker called the meeting to order at 7pm.
Attending members (in alphabetical order): F. Hall, R. Helmecki, J. Lovelace, J. O'Brien, M. Reeves, K. Tucker.
Absent: R. Field (See report submitted prior to the meeting.)
2. Public Comments: No public comments.
3. Review and Approve December 9, 2021 Meeting Minutes: With a motion by M. Reeves, and a second by J. Lovelace, the minutes were approved.
4. Discuss and Approve ECC Budget FY 2022-2023: Members discussed the proposed budget for the next fiscal year. With a motion by M. Reeves to approve the proposed budget, as amended and discussed, and a 2nd by F. Hall, the proposed budget was approved at \$13,200, an increase of \$1075 over ECC FY 2021-2022 Board of Finance and First Selectman approved budget. (Budget proposal accompanies these minutes).
5. Old Business to include trail reports and management issues in town preserves:
 - A. **Bushy Hill Preserve:** R. Helmecki reported that he walked on 1/12/22 and that the trails look good and have received a lot of use. He said the Essex Fire Department installed signs in two different locations to indicate vehicular access in case of emergency. (See R. Helmecki's photo below.) In the 1st location, there are two signs in front of the pond located along the entrance trail to the preserve. In case of emergency, the fire department would proceed to the right as far as the Eagle Scout bridge. The 2nd location is along the red trail. Richard said he would discuss with Myron Sacks, ELT, and ask that the access marker be re-positioned to show that any emergency vehicle should bear right and proceed to the ELT Platt Property trail. A recently installed ECC boundary sign near the Oakledge Drive access trail has been removed and is missing. Helmecki will ask Terry Steward, ELT steward for the Platt Property, if he knows anything about the sign. F. Hall noted that it will be challenging for the fire department

to use motorized vehicle to access the Canfield Meadow Woods trails in the event of an emergency since they are single file and narrow. R. Helmecki reported that the Essex Land Trust did a good job clearing brush and pricklers on the Blue Trail entrance trail.



B. **Canfield Meadow Woods:** In a report submitted prior to the meeting, R. Field wrote:

1. ELT received a permit application to hold an organized woods walk for early February. It's billed as a Woodland Bath, apparently a spiritual awareness of nature in a woodland setting. Update: Locations were scouted by the applicant; the application has since been withdrawn due to an encounter with unsupervised dogs on the trail.
2. The stewards have reported three felled trees across the trails over the past two months. All were of modest size and easily removed.
3. There was one suspected incidence of vandalism: an information placard near the viewing platform was found on the ground, broken into pieces. Speculation was the placard had been deliberately broken with a rock or tree limb. A new replacement placard was mounted nearby

and to date remains undisturbed. No clue who or why this was done and incidence will not be pursued further as it is believed to be a one-off occurrence.

4. Several trees on the Eagle Ridge trail have received white blaze marks. We do not know who has done this nor for what purpose. Investigation to continue.

5. Trail usage over the holiday period has been robust with trails remaining in good repair.

C. **Viney Hill Brook Preserve:** F. Hall reported that he installed 4 additional white marker signs along the Upland trail. He reported that Mike Callahan of Beaver Solutions, LLC, put a screened cover on top of the concrete culvert buried under the ROW road, Cedar Grove Terrace. The reinstalled fence on the culvert to Quarry Pond had been moved over by the rain. K. Tucker reported that purple signs are missing on Forest Glade Trail. R. Helmecki and M. Reeves will do an inventory to determine if there are more purple trail markers. K. Tucker reported that she asked Mike Callahan, Beaver Solutions, about beaver activity in Quarry Pond. Callahan advised commissioners to look for recent mud packing around the installed beaver exclusion devices. It's unknown if the two beaver lodges in Quarry Pond are currently active. F. Hall said there's more evidence of beavers in the active recreation area at Wollock's Pond. Hall will do a twilight check for beaver activity in the spring. J. Lovelace added that since November the beaver lodges have not appeared to be in use.

D. Other: Stakes and Boundary lines: J. O'Brien noted that when he and K. Tucker met for the work party in November, he noticed the iron pipe was 20ft off-set. Commissioners are awaiting written detail and a sketch of the boundary stakes/flags installed by Doane's Engineering, P.C. The project was contracted for FY 20-21. J. O'Brien suggested there be a 5-year plan when staking out the boundary lines, with a sketch of the areas, so that commissioners appointed in the future can easily interpret the boundaries as staked.

6. New Business to Include:

A. Poet Trail: F. Hall reported that while hiking on the northern section of the Paugussett Trail from Sheldon to Monroe, he noticed slates with poetry quotes and painted scenes of nature. He thought they were interesting and wanted to propose a plan to design and install them in one of our town preserves. Discussion was held. J. O'Brien felt that the project could be interpreted in a subjective way and that some people would prefer something as simple as tree identification.

M. Reeves asked if our commission is empowered to start a project like this or would it need approval from the Board of Selectmen. R. Helmecki said he prefers that nature be left alone but that it may be a good project for the woods behind the Essex Town Park. J. Lovelace agreed with M. Reeves and R. Helmecki. M. Reeves added that others may feel inclined to add their own signs, which could become problematic. J. Lovelace said that "Nature for you may be different for me." K. Tucker thanked F. Hall for his ideas and that they are appreciated. She suggested that it may be a good project for the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts. J. Lovelace added that an art show in the Essex Town Hall would be a lovely exhibit. M. Reeves said that the pictures with descriptions could go into Essex Events magazine.

- B. Other
- 7. Financial Report YTD 2021-22 and Proposed FYE Expenditures: K. Tucker reported on expenses: All Habitat (\$2500), Herbicide at Viney Hill Brook (\$1200), and Clark's Custom Services to mow the wildflower meadow in early spring while the ground is still frozen.
- 8. Other
- 9. Adjournment: With a motion to adjourn by F. Hall, and a 2nd by M. Reeves, the meeting was adjourned at 8:20pm.

Next Scheduled Meeting February 10, 2022, 7:00 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Susan K. McCann, Clerk