



TOWN OF ESSEX
Conservation Commission

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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*

Meeting of the Essex Conservation Commission
March 10, 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) included: R. Field, F. Hall, R. Helmecki, J. O'Brien, M. Reeves, K. Tucker
Absent: J. Lovelace
2. Public Comments: No public comments.
3. Review and Approve February 10, 2022 Meeting Minutes: The following correction was made to the minutes: Document and Item 3: change 2021 to 2022. With a motion by F. Hall, and a 2nd by J. O'Brien, the minutes were approved with the above date corrections.
4. Old Business to include trail reports and management issues in town preserves:
A. Bushy Hill Preserve: K. Tucker sent the following email message and photo to Tree Warden Augie Pampel, First Selectman Norm Needleman, and Essex Land Trust President Jim Denham:

FYI Bushy Hill Preserve, March 4, 2022

An old hemlock tree, attacked by woolly adelgids decades ago, is leaning over the trail leading to the Falls River. Currently the dead hemlock is lodged in the fork of a nearby tree. Most likely it will remain partially upright until it weakens and falls. Today ECC members ran caution tape around the tree to deter hikers from proceeding along the trail under the tree. (Photo attached) Once the ground thaws, commissioners plan to install signs directing hikers to take a short curved detour around the hemlock. Small red arrows point out the detour path for now. Please advise if you have suggestions for taking down this hazard. Thank you.

Kay Tucker, ECC Chair



Richard Helmecki, photo credit

As to the above, K. Tucker reported that Terry Stewart, ELT, first reported the leaning hemlock to R. Helmecki. R. Field made an on-site inspection and confirmed that the tree was a potential hazard. On March 4, Helmecki and K. Tucker cordoned off the trail with caution tape; piled brush, sticks, and logs to deter hikers from proceeding under the caution tape, and cut some small saplings to make the detour trail more accessible. J. Denham (ELT President) asked Scott McCoid, an ELT steward, to inspect the hemlock. McCoid's field report confirmed the hazard and further stated that Essex Land Trust stewards were willing and capable of removing the hemlock. K. Tucker suggested that ECC ask the Tree Warden and First Selectman if they wanted to authorize the ELT to go forward with this project since the hemlock is on town, not ELT, property in Bushy Hill Preserve. R. Field noted that this will be a tough tree removal, but that ELT has the equipment and man power to do so. All agreed for K. Tucker to take this administrative action.

B. Canfield Meadow Woods: R. Field reported that there are two downed trees, i.e., one on the green trail and one on the red trail. The trees broke off at the ground level. All is okay. Everything is just muddy.

C. Viney Hill Brook Preserve: F. Hall reported that:

a. He walked around Quarry Pond with volunteer Dana Hill. There is an 18" in diameter uprooted tree near the picnic table at the edge of Quarry Pond. The roots are exposed. The tree currently leans on another tree about 30' up. Professional tree service removal will be required. M. Reeves noted that the tree probably does not present an immediate danger; only in a wind event. We should

take a picture and send it to Ryan Walsh, Town Crew Foreman. It will be a challenge to get a cherry picker in there for removal.

b. The exclusion fence and pond leveler are working.

c. The Eagle Scout Bridge is in sturdy condition. M. Reeves added that he has enough materials to build 3 more bog bridges.

d. F. Hall will report, at the next meeting, on any noted beaver activity.

e. There are ample trail markers along Turtle Nesting, Upland, and Forest Glade Trails.

f. K. Tucker reported that the town crew agreed to weed whack the dormant phragmite patch and to mow the cedar grove which abuts the ROW road. J. Lovelace e-mailed that Clarks Custom Services mowed the wildflower meadow which was left standing this past fall and winter for migrating birds and other wildlife.

D. Other: J O'Brien continues to ask Doane, PE, to provide a brief written report explaining the survey boundary markers placed at Bushy Hill and Viney Hill Brook Preserves.

5. New Business: K. Tucker asked if the commission wanted to schedule a public evening beaver walk as in past years at Viney Hill Brook Preserve. F Hall will consider the possibility. R. Helmecki said that spring weed whacking can be scheduled around the pond at Bushy Hill Preserve. M. Reeves said commissioners should wait another month before attempting such clean up since the ground is like a sponge now.

6. Financial Report YTD 2021-22

A. Board of Finance Proposed ECC Budget 2022-23: K. Tucker reported that the Board of Finance recommended that the ECC budget remain flat.

B. Recommendations for Expenditures: K. Tucker authorized a payment of \$435 for the Wildflower Meadow mowing. She asked if we should order additional gravel for the entrance to Bushy Hill Preserve. M. Reeves suggested waiting until after mud season but to make a preliminary inquiry regarding procurement with delivery in May.

7. Other: M. Reeves recommended that commissioners watch the movie *Borealis* now available on Amazon Prime. “7.3 1 h 33 min 2020 ALL Acclaimed director Kevin McMahon (Waterlife) travels deep into the heart of the boreal forest to explore the chorus of life in Canada's iconic wilderness. How do trees move, communicate and survive the destructive forces of fire, insects, and human encroachment? Borealis offers an immersive portrait of the lifecycles of the forest from the perspective of the plants and animals that live there.”

M. Reeves also thanked F. Hall for the article about beech trees that he had shared. Discussion took place about the problem of infected American Beech trees and the subsequent problem of the infected trees being relocated or turned into wood chips, which can then further the spread of the deadly nematodes.

8. Adjournment: With a motion by M. Reeves, and a 2nd by J. O’Brien, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 7:39pm.

Next Scheduled Meeting April 14, 2022, 7:00 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Susan McCann, Clerk