



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**

*Vacancy*  
*Vacancy*

**Essex Conservation Commission**

Regular Meeting August 11, 2022, Auditorium\*, 7:00 pm

\*The meeting was held in the Auditorium due to work being done in Room A.

1. Call to Order and Roll Call: K. Tucker called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. In attendance:  
R. Helmecki, J. Lovelace, J. O'Brien, M. Reeves, K. Tucker  
Absent/Excused: F. Hall
2. Public Comments: There were no public comments.
3. Review and Approve July 14, 2022 Special Meeting Minutes: Two minor corrections:  
Section 4. A. Under Bushy Hill Preserve: "Clark's Custom Services **mowed** the field."  
Section 5. New Business: Add: "**There was no new business reported.**"

With a motion by J. O'Brien and a 2<sup>nd</sup> by J. Lovelace, the minutes were approved by all with the above two corrections.

4. Old Business to include trail reports and management issues in town preserves:

A. Bushy Hill Preserve: R. Helmecki reported that on July 28<sup>th</sup>, he and Terry Stewart, ELT, cleared a leaning tree on the Yellow Trail and another on the Green Trail. The hemlock continues to lean over a portion of the Red Trail. Helmecki reported that the pond is currently "bone dry." M. Reeves inquired if anything needed to be cut or removed from the dry pond bottom.

K. Tucker reported that on July 22<sup>nd</sup>, All Habitat completed a mosquito treatment. Commissioners were advised to contact Carissa Bradley, Project Manager All Habitat, for more information if needed.

B. Canfield Meadow Woods: J. O'Brien reported that he has read the reports from the Essex Land Trail stewards. Canfield Meadow Woods appears to be in good shape.

C. Viney Hill Brook Preserve: On August 10<sup>th</sup>, F. Hall emailed the following report to the ECC: "I walked the trails in Viney Hill Brook Park this morning which included: Broad Walk, Turtle Nesting area, Quarry Pond, Uplands Woods, and Forest Glade. They are all dry and passable. There is no water running into Quarry Pond from the pond adjacent to the ROW road. There is very little water flowing out of Quarry Pond. The entrance to Forest Glade trail from Upland Woods trail needs to be weed whacked. Is this an area that Clarks Custom Services is responsible for?" Responding to this report, and prior to the meeting, J. Lovelace notified Ely Clark, CCS, to mow the area immediately.

1. Phragmites Patch: K. Tucker reported that she met with Desirae Hansen, Project Manager for All Habitat, and her assistant, on August 8th to specifically inspect the Phragmites Patch. The phragmites are flourishing in this area. Ms. Hansen said they had not treated the patch this season but that it was not too late, and special attention would be given when the second application was tendered.

K. Tucker said that Ms. Hansen reported that All Habitat, in previous years, had sprayed the open-space, between the wildflower and cedar meadows, which was once overrun with Japanese Knot Weed. This invasive vegetation is now somewhat controlled.

Discussion took place about mowing the invasive Mugwort growing in the Cedar Meadow in October, rather than early spring 2023. Mugwort seeds in the fall. The town crew has mowed this area for the past two years. Mowing would be based on the crew's availability and scheduling.

The Beaver Lodge in Quarry Pond appears to be inactive. The mud exterior is dry, and there are no sticks or fresh vegetation covering the mound.

The Wildflower Meadow has good pollinators growing throughout.

K. Tucker reported that there is grass growing in the passive parking lot.

K. Tucker listed the following to-do list: 1. Remove poison ivy from the trees in the Cedar Meadow inside the boundary fence and the ROW road; poison ivy is prevalent beside Quarry Pond trail from the Beaver Exclusion Fence and then past the town's boundary line and our abutting neighbor's. M. Reeves agreed that this is the time to remove poison ivy.

Since July 18<sup>th</sup>, another tree has fallen onto a bog bridge near the phragmite patch. M. Reeves said that work should take place this in September when it is cooler. K. Tucker hand pulled vegetation behind the boundary fence in the passive parking lot.

2. Wollock's Pond Trail: K. Tucker reiterated that clean-up is needed on the Wollock's Pond Trail. This will be a September ECC project.

K. Tucker encouraged commissioners to walk in the Preserves and to bring hand tools for opening the trails as needed.

D. Discuss and approve ECC 2021-22 Annual Town Report Submission: K. Tucker thanked J. Lovelace for his help with the Town Annual Report. J. Lovelace recommended the following edits: 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph: remove commas after **works** and after **field** to read, "and works in the field to control invasive vegetation." Also, credit J. Lovelace for the photo included with the report. With a motion by M. Reeves and a 2<sup>nd</sup> by J. Lovelace, the report was approved for submission with the edits noted above.

E. Other: J. Lovelace reported on the following three issues: 1. He spoke to Tree Warden Augie Pampel about the procedure of notifying the ECC prior to taking down trees. Augie told him he would try to notify the ECC prior to taking down trees in any of the three preserves managed by the ECC, but it is the Tree Warden's responsibility to take down trees as needed. 2. J. Lovelace researched Clark's Custom Services invoices and noted that CCS charges \$50 per hour. 3. J. Lovelace talked to Tracey Celentano, Director of Finance. Ms. Celentano said that, in the future, when the ECC incurs expenses which directly benefit the Town, such as the boundary surveys for Bushy Hill and VHB preserves, it is possible that the Town has funds already budgeted and the monies may not need to come from ECC's budget. The ECC agreed to coordinate with the Department of Finance if future expenses of that nature are incurred.

5. New Business: There was no new business reported.

6. Financial Report

A. 2022-23 FY Proposed Expenditures: Clarks Custom Services for July regular grounds maintenance \$900 (\$400 for Bushy Hill Preserve and \$500 for Viney Hill Preserve).

B. Other: All Habitat expects to increase their fees by 25% in the coming year due to the price of materials and gasoline. M. Reeves suggested that the commission request a letter detailing these increases for Fiscal Year 2023-24 budget planning. The ECC should also request a letter of detail from Beaver Solutions, LLC.

M. Reeves suggested that the ECC make an organized pitch for an increase to the ECC budget for the FY 2023-24.

7. Other: M. Reeves made the following comments: Current thought in environmental circles (news reports and websites) suggests that there should be a balance between creating cleaned-out, park-like preserves that look like golf courses (with no algae, for example), vs. areas, which are left alone and where species of flora and fauna (e.g., beavers) can thrive. R. Helmecki agreed that it is important to let nature take its course.

K. Tucker said that the ECC will hold a September work party.

J. Lovelace will direct CCS to mow Broadwalk, VHBP, while the area remains dry and can be accessed with large equipment.

With a motion by K. Tucker, and a 2<sup>nd</sup> by J. Lovelace, the meeting was adjourned at 8:25pm.

8. Adjournment

Next Scheduled Meeting September 8, 2022, Room A, 7:00 PM

Respectfully submitted by Susan K. McCann.  
ECC Clerk