



**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 Meeting  
October 13, 2022, Kitchen (1<sup>st</sup> floor), 7:00 pm

1. K. Tucker called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. In attendance: F. Hall, R. Helmecki, J. Lovelace, J. O'Brien, K. Tucker. Absent/Excused: M. Reeves.
2. Public Comments: There were no public comments.
3. Review and Approve September 8, 2022 Meeting Minutes: With a motion by F. Hall and a 2<sup>nd</sup> by J. O'Brien, the minutes were unanimously approved.
4. Old Business to include trail reports and management issues in town preserves:
  - A. Bushy Hill Preserve: R. Helmecki reported that he and Terry Stewart, ELT steward, cleared 2 trees from the blue town-owned property trail and one tree off the pink Platt/ELT trail. He refilled trail maps, reported that the trails look good, that the hemlock tree is still leaning, and that two dead trees remain in the parking lot. He reported that there is some water in the pond and submitted a report on the number of trail markers, sign types, and arrows as follows:

Trail or Sign Type	Number of Trail Markers	Number of Arrows
Yellow	22	
Green	24	6
Orange	5	
Blue	13	9
Purple	27	
White	1	
Red	9	2
No Public Access Boundary	24	

This inventory shows that trail markers need not be ordered now.

K. Tucker added that on September 16, All Habitat inspected, and after two positive dips, found 10 larvae with moderate breeding. All Habitat treated the area per contract.

B. Canfield Meadow Woods: K. Tucker said that George Wendell, ELT, gave her three updates. 1) There is a tree that is cobbled by wire. Directions to the tree follow: From Dennison parking entrance, take the 2<sup>nd</sup> left, and proceed onto the Mile Trail. ELT steward asked ECC to inspect this cabled tree; Tucker and J. O'Brien will do so. 2) G. Wendell met another hiker with three electric-collar wearing dogs. ELT plans to meet with hiker to discuss these collars. 3) G. Wendell encountered a person riding an electric bike in CMW. Biker ignored Mr. Wendell's advice that bikes are not allowed and continued to access the trails. Commission members stated that only passive recreation (no bikes) is allowed in town-owned preserves.

C. Viney Hill Brook Preserve  
1. Wollock's Pond Trail



Photo credit: J Lovelace, 2018

Beaver created pond, showing water and berms



Photo credit: F. Hall, October 12, 2022

Following the September ECC meeting, M. Reeves and J. Lovelace met with CCS to restore access to Broadwalk while the ground was dry due to the summer drought. To restore the water pathway that existed prior to beaver activity there, a small trench was dug to release waters from the beaver impacted area. The recent CCS Invoice for September included hours required to make the main trail (Broadwalk) usable again.

F. Hall reported that he walked the following trails on October 12: Quarry Pond, Broadwalk, Turtle Nesting Area, Upland Woods, and Forest Glade. The trails were dry, the tall grass had been cut and the leaning tree south of the passive parking lot had been removed. Hall replaced 15 maps in the kiosk at the entrance. Pond leveling devices are working as designed at the ROW Road Pond as well as Quarry Pond. Grasses in the Wildflower Meadow area seem to be prematurely brown due to drought conditions. The phragmites patch along the South end of Broadwalk, treated in August, will be dormant cut early next spring. No other problems noted.

Discussion took place between F. Hall and K. Tucker that the three bog bridges that had been moved by CCS need to be moved back into position when/if the ground becomes water saturated.

Commissioners F Hall, M Reeves and K Tucker met October 4 and again October 11, on-site, to clear encroaching tree limbs, invasives and vegetation from a portion of Wollock's Pond trail.

Sink holes, marked in past years with caution tape, need to be readdressed.

K. Tucker said that the ECC may consider moving this trail more inland if it continues to erode making passage too difficult. The exposed gnarly roots also add to the challenge of walking this trail.

There are two grey birch trees that have toppled onto the Turtle Nesting Trail. It is possible to step over these fallen trees. Because Observation Rock is a feature of this trail, commissioners might want to weed whack around and clean the vegetation growing from the cracks atop it.

K. Tucker said she met Joe Lucarelli, member of the Town Crew, who was inspecting the Phragmites patch. J. Lucarelli stated that he would remind Director R. Welsh that the Cedar Meadow should be cut in October as previously agreed upon.

D. Other to include:

1. Boy Scout Workshop Saturday, October 15, 10:00 am: J. O'Brien reported he will cover the tools that surveyors use to measure distances (theodolites vs. transits); how to read a map; angles and distances, and markers that have been used to represent distances (drill holes in walls, stakes). He said he would offer hands-on activities, such as marking the corners of a five-sided lot (recording angles, area of closure, compare readings); writing field notes and drawing on a map; determining elevation, and discuss meets and bounds surveys. K. Tucker suggested the Boy Scouts hike the trails after the workshop.

5. New Business: There was no new business.

6. Financial Report YTD 2022-23

A. Expenditures: K. Tucker said that the clerk has been paid. K. Tucker reviewed Clarks Custom Services Invoice for September. As follows:

Regular mowing--\$500 for VHBP; \$400 for BHP; \$450 brush hog to restore Broadway Trail from the Wildflower Meadow to Wollock's Pond, and \$810 to excavate the pathway for releasing water running from the uplands that allowed water drainage before beavers dammed the area. Beaver activity created a deep, barricaded pond which floods Broadwalk and makes this main trail nearly impassable.

The remaining \$8950 is allocated to cover All Habitat, CCS and Beaver Solutions.

7. Other: Dark Skies: K. Tucker introduced an environmental concern in that animals, birds, and humans are "craving darkness;" man-made lights affect them and the lack of darkness affects, in particular, migrating birds. She asked the Commission to consider if this is an issue they would like to pursue in the future.

8. Adjournment: With a motion by F. Hall and a 2<sup>nd</sup> by J. Lovelace, the meeting was adjourned at 8pm.

Next Scheduled Meeting November 10, 2022, Room TBD, 7:00 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Susan K. McCann, Clerk