



TOWN OF ESSEX  
**Conservation Commission**

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**Executive Board**  
*Kathleen Tucker, Chairman*  
*Jim O'Brien, Vice Chair*

**Regular Members**

Frank Hall  
*Richard Helmecki*  
*Mark J. Reeves*  
*Elizabeth Stulga*  
*Vacancy*

**Alternate Member**

*Vacancy*  
*Vacancy*

Minutes of a Meeting held on  
May 11, 2023, Town Hall Kitchen, 7:00 pm

1. Call to Order and Roll Call: K. Tucker called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. In attendance: F. Hall, R. Helmecki, M. Reeves, K. Tucker. New Commissioner: Elizabeth Stulga  
Absent/Excused: J. O'Brien
2. Welcome New Commissioner: K. Tucker introduced Elizabeth Stulga. Ms. Stulga said she recently moved from PA to Ivoryton for work. She is excited to join ECC as she wants to give back to and create a sense of community, and she cares about green spaces. Elizabeth's term is currently through 2024 but will renew as a 3-year-term. She was sworn in by the town clerk prior to the meeting. R. Helmecki presented her with an official ECC cap.
3. Public Comments: No public comments.
4. Review and Approve April 13, 2023 Meeting Minutes: With a motion to approve the minutes by M. Reeves, and a 2<sup>nd</sup> by F. Hall, the minutes were approved. E. Stulga abstained.
  - 4a. K. Tucker asked for a modification to the Agenda. With a motion by M. Reeves, and a 2<sup>nd</sup> by F. Hall, the Commissioners agreed to begin with New Business.
5. New Business:
  - A. Grant Opportunity for Trail Stewardship: First Selectman Norm Needleman forwarded a Lower Connecticut River Land Trust Small Stewardship Grant application with purpose and overall guidelines as follows:

The Lower Connecticut River Land Trust, due to the generosity of Guilford Savings Bank, is offering a small grant opportunity to help fund stewardship related projects on our member, and Land Trust Exchange member, land trusts and community properties that are protected in perpetuity, accessible to the public, and have an existing management plan. Submission of a short report with pictures is a requirement.

Commissioners discussed that the professional take down of a hazardous leaning tree would be an excellent fit for this grant. The leaning tree is a safety issue. The Red Trail, over which it hangs, is heavily used by hikers, bird watchers and dog walkers. With a motion by M. Reeves and a 2<sup>nd</sup> by R. Helmecki, a summary of the grant request was unanimously approved as follows:

**The Project is to hire a Professional licensed tree service to take down a hazardous hemlock uprooted and leaning over a heavily-used public walking trail (Red Trail at Bushy Hill Preserve, Bushy Hill Road, Ivoryton, CT 06442).**

**Access to the leaning tree from the Bushy Hill Preserve entrance parking area (from the Blue Trail, then left onto the Red Trail) is approximately 1 mile.**



Bushy Hill Preserve leaning Hemlock photo credit: R. Helmecki

R. Helmecki informed commissioners that the caution tape cordoning the leaning tree had recently been removed.

B. Other: K. Tucker discussed the CT River Gateway Commission proposal to discuss the problem of light pollution on migrating birds. There is an upcoming meeting on May 25 at 7pm to discuss the issue. The organization would like the 19 COG towns to adopt a definition and position about light pollution. E. Stulga motioned that ECC write a letter of support for this worthwhile proposal. With a 2<sup>nd</sup> by M. Reeves, agreement for ECC to submit a letter of support was approved unanimously.

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

A. Bushy Hill Preserve: R. Helmecki reported that, on April 27, he and K. Tucker weed whacked and cleared vegetation around the pond (in the pouring rain). K. Tucker said that she saw ajuga (a small wildflower) growing at the end of the pond. On May 4, R. Helmecki noticed that the yellow caution tape was missing around the hazardous hemlock and that the Eagle Scout Bridge was in disrepair. M. Reeves said new lumber to rebuild the rotted Eagle Scout bridge abutting the Falls River is required. Getting the lumber down the steep, narrow slope will be a challenge and methods to access were discussed.

B. Canfield Meadow Woods: K. Tucker said that the ELT stewards post reports after their inspections. There is an issue of people biking on the trails. Discussion took place about placing visible NO BIKING signs at the entrances to town owned preserves.

C. Viney Hill Brook Preserve: Prior to the meeting, F. Hall distributed his report: "On Wednesday, 5-10-23, I walked the following trails: Quarry Pond-Blue, Broadwalk-Orange, Turtle Nesting Area-Red, Uplands Woods-White, and Forest Glade-Purple. The two beaver exclusion fences and pond levelers were functioning as designed. In the prior week, there was about 1.6" of rain in this area. While the trails were wet, they were all passable, except for the section of Broadwalk that is South of Tucker Pond. This trail needs more bog-bridges. A fallen tree needs to be removed on the White Trail. I replaced 8 maps at the Kiosk at the entrance." F. Hall provided the following photos of VHBP.



Small pond on Forest Glade Trail



Broadwalk near Tucker Pond

K. Tucker added that she saw 3 Box Turtles sunning on the big rock in Quarry Pond and 12 on the beaver-felled tree trunks in the pond near the Eagle Scout Bridge. She also reported that poison ivy is growing on Quarry Pond trail and that purple trail markers need replacing on Forest Glade Trail.

**Kay Tucker set up a work party for Tuesday, May 23, 1:30-2:30pm. M. Reeves, K. Tucker, and F. Hall will meet to cut underbrush from the entrance to Forest Glade Trail and to replace purple trail markers, as needed.**

D. Other:

1. NO Bicycle Riding in Town Preserves: Discussed earlier in the minutes.

7. Financial Report YTD and Proposed FYE Expenditures: K. Tucker reported that, at the end of April, \$6,342 remained in the budget. \$4,000 is earmarked for All Habitat Services. F. Hall and K. Tucker discussed funds needed for tall-grass trail maintenance at Viney Hill Brook Preserve. The cost for a gas can (\$28.78) was authorized. Discussion to purchase lumber for bridge repair and additional bog bridges followed. With a motion by M. Reeves and a 2<sup>nd</sup> by F. Hall, the expense of \$300 for lumber was unanimously approved.

8. Other: No other business.

9. Adjournment: With a motion by F. Hall and a 2<sup>nd</sup> by R. Helmecki, the meeting was adjourned at 8:20pm. **Next Scheduled Meeting June 8, 2023, 7:00 pm**

Respectfully submitted,  
Susan K. McCann, ECC Clerk