



TOWN OF ESSEX  
**Conservation Commission**

29 West Avenue • Essex, Connecticut 06426  
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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*

Meeting Minutes

June 8, 2023, Town Hall Kitchen, 7:00 pm

1. Call to Order and Roll Call: K. Tucker called the meeting to order at 7pm. In attendance: F. Hall, R. Helmecki, J. O'Brien, M. Reeves, K. Tucker  
Absent: E. Stulga
2. Public Comments: There were no public comments.
3. Review and Approve May 11, 2023 Meeting Minutes: With a motion by M. Reeves, and a 2<sup>nd</sup> by F. Hall, the minutes were approved.
4. Old Business to include trail reports and management issues in town preserves:
  - A. Bushy Hill Preserve: K. Tucker reported that on May 17, All Habitat inspected the pond, which revealed 9 positive mosquitoes after 18 dips on 32 larvae. The area was treated per contract. K. Tucker also said that she and Maryann Pleva, a former ECC member, walked to the leaning trees, and restored yellow caution tape, which had been removed, to both trees. She said that there had been no mowing and that maps are needed at the entrance kiosk. (M. Reeves has been in contact with Clarks Custom Services.) She noted that limbs from the dead trees in the parking area had fallen. She said that the CT State flower, mountain laurel, is blooming throughout the preserve. Kay also noted that there is a partially cut trunk on the yellow trail that needs chain sawing.
  - B. Canfield Meadow Woods: J. O'Brien said that the ELT stewards have colored a map of the trails from the Dennison RD parking area to the Book Hill Woods entrance. Jim has enlarged the coloring and will fax this map to Conservation Commission members so that it will be easier to follow which trails the ELT clears or cites issues that require attention. K. Tucker said that the ELT, which ordered a portalet for an elementary school hike, had the portalet removed after the event. A complaint to the ECC regarding the unsightly portalet had been received.
  - C. Viney Hill Brook Preserve: F. Hall reported on his site visit June 6, 2023:

On my visit, I walked on Forest Glade Trail (Purple) and added new trail markers to increase visibility of them. Also, I walked on Broadwalk, Upper and Lower Turtle Trail (Red), Upland Woods (White), and

Quarry Pond (Blue). The Pond Leveler and Exclusion fence devices for Quarry Pond were operational. Parts of Quarry Pond Trail and Broadwalk near Tucker Pond have overgrown grass that needs to be trimmed. On Quarry Pond Trail, I almost stepped on a long Black snake that might have been either a Black Rat snake or an Eastern Racer known to be fast with a speed of 8-10 mph. I found it to be stubborn rather than fast. All trails were passable with no fallen trees noted. The trails were mostly dry due to a lack of rain. On a weekly basis, I have been replacing trail maps at the kiosk as needed.

K. Tucker, F. Hall, and M. Reeves met for a work party on May 23. They cleared the overgrown vegetation and tall grass from the entrance to Forest Glade trail, installed a new entrance trail marker and re-positioned the bog bridges on Broadwalk. No evidence of beaver activity in the Quarry Pond lodge. K. Tucker said that on June 9, All Habitat would do their first treatment on the phragmites.

D. Other to include:

1. CT River Gateway Commission Light Pollution Amendments and ECC Letter of Support: K. Tucker thanked M. Reeves for initiating the letter of support to adopt the CT River Gateway proposed standard to reduce light pollution that ECC sent to COG. Chester Conservation Commission and DEEP Sr. Coastal Planner Marcie Ballint also sent letters of support.

2. Town of Essex Grant Application Hazardous Tree Removal Bushy Hill Preserve: K. Tucker reported that Guilford Savings Bank has awarded up to \$750 to cut and crash the leaner tree. R. Helmecki will obtain bids from three licensed landscape companies. J. O'Brien volunteered to draft a Request for Proposal that can be distributed to landscapers seeking to bid on this project. Congratulations ECC!

5. New Business to Include:

A. ECC Goals and To Do's FY 2023-24: K. Tucker opened discussion for goals. M. Reeves suggested keeping the trails open and repairing the footbridge. K. Tucker asked for approval for \$350 for a battery operated hedge trimmer. Further goals are to add 1 regular and 2 alternative members to commission roster. J. O'Brien suggested scheduling a Fall Trail Walk in the preserves we manage.

B. Other: Discussion took place about CT General Assembly HB-6781 Affordable Housing. (The CT General Assembly debating to weaken Inland/Wetlands regulations.) M. Reeves will draft letter to District 36 representatives that local autonomy regarding zoning and wetlands regulations should not be by-passed.

6. Financial Report YTD and Proposed FYE Expenditures: \$2625 mosquito inspections, abatement; \$1500 phragmites treatments to All Habitat. With a motion by M. Reeves, and a 2<sup>nd</sup> by F. Hall, an additional \$200 was approved, totaling \$500, for lumber to rebuild the footbridge bridge and for additional bog bridges as needed. The remaining funds will be expended on mowing and weed whacking the trails in Bushy Hill and Viney Hill Brook Preserves. Fund balance through May, 2023: \$6087.

7. Other: No other business.

9. Adjournment: With a motion by M. Reeves, and a 2<sup>nd</sup> by F. Hall, the meeting was adjourned at 8:23pm. Next Scheduled Meeting July 13, 2023, 7:00 pm