



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*

Minutes of the ECC Meeting held on Thursday, July 13, 2023 in the Town Hall Kitchen at 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, J. O'Brien, M. Reeves, K. Tucker. Public in attendance: Tom Soboleski, ELT lead steward Canfield Meadow Woods and applicant to become an alternate member of ECC.  
Absent: E. Stulga

2. Public Comments: K. Tucker welcomed Tom Soboleski to the meeting.

3. Review and Approve June 8, 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

1. Town of Essex Grant Hazardous Tree Removal: ECC applied for and received a grant from the Lower Connecticut River Land Trust, sponsored by Guilford Savings Bank, for up to \$750, for the removal of one tree on the Red Trail at Bushy Hill Preserve. R. Helmecki and E. Stulga sought 3 quotes from licensed tree service companies. The quotes came back as follows: \$600 from Critical Tree Solutions, LLC; \$600 from Howard Tree Service, and \$1000 from Wilcox Tree Experts. Discussion took place. With a motion by M. Reeves, and a 2<sup>nd</sup> by F. Hall, to accept the Howard Tree Service as quoted, the vote was called. J. O'Brien, Frank Hall and Mark Reeves voted yay. R. Helmecki and K. Tucker voted to abstain. Motion carried. K. Tucker reviewed terms of the grant award, which include photos of the leaner tree (before and after take down), an accepted licensed tree service quote, and a written report upon completion of the project.

R. Helmecki walked BHP on Saturday, June 10. He said that the bridge on the Red Trail was in deplorable condition. He and E. Stulga deconstructed the rotted bridge on June 12 and, using the boards, which were salvageable, replaced it with a plank bridge.



Photo of Plank Bridge: credit by R. Helmecki\_2023

M. Reeves will seek information on the Valley Regional High School Warriors community service program for volunteers willing to carry lumber and materials down narrow, sloping trails to where a new bridge will be built.

On July 10, R. Helmecki walked the trails again and noticed that the fields were mowed.

B. Canfield Meadow Woods: J. O'Brien said ELT reported that the cordoned cracked tree had fallen and been removed. The crown of the tree fell and obstructed the Canfield Trail. Guest Tom Soboleski reported that he cut down 6 trees at CMW. The trees appeared to be healthy with no rot but that the shallowness of the roots had caused cracking and uprooting.

C. Viney Hill Brook Preserve: F. Hall said that he replaced Trail maps this week but had not walked the trails. K. Tucker said that she was concerned about the overgrown grass abutting the trails.

D. Other

1. Review Correspondence Regarding Proposed House Bill-6781 (which seeks to eliminate the protection of inland wetlands and watercourses when land is sought for the development of affordable housing): K. Tucker said that ECC sent a letter to State District #36 Representatives Senator Norm Needleman and Representative Christine Palm to state that ECC is concerned about wetlands protection, that local autonomy to manage and protect inland wetlands and other open spaces should be honored, and urged Mr. Needleman and Ms. Palm to vote against any efforts to modify our land use regulations to favor developers by weakening wetlands and watercourses restrictions. E-mail reply received from CT Association of Inland Wetlands and

Watercourse Commission representative in Middletown that HB-6781 had been rolled into the State Budget and passed as HB-6941.

2. ELT ordered new trail maps for Canfield Meadow Woods. ECC must reimburse ELT for a portion of the cost of the maps. Reimbursement cost TBD by ELT. No Bike Signs: K. Tucker reported that ELT has provided “No Bike” signs for the entrances to Bushy Hill and Viney Hill Brook preserves.

3. Discussion took place regarding routine mowing and maintenance in Bushy Hill and Viney Hill Brook Preserves for FY 2022-23 and FY 2023-24.

5. New Business: There was no new business.

6. Financial Report FYE Expenditures: K. Tucker reported that all outstanding invoices have been paid except to the commission clerk (FY May 30, 2023 \$764) through June 30, 2023.

Beaver Solutions \$684.

All Habitat Service \$1500 (Phragmites treatment); All Habitat Service \$2500 (Mosquito abatement).

Lumber & Miscellaneous \$529.

Clark’s Custom Services \$1260 (Excavator and Brushhog equipment)

Clark’s Custom Services \$6450 (Regular mowing and maintenance Bushy Hill, Viney Hill preserves).

Discussion took place that CCS increased their hourly wages for labor, in 2023, by 25% without prior notice to the Conservation Commission. Since ECC had a long-standing arrangement but not a formal contract with CCS, the April, May, June invoices were protested but paid.

7. Other: None.

9. Adjournment: With a motion by M. Reeves, and a 2<sup>nd</sup> by J. O’Brien, the meeting was adjourned at 8:36pm.

**Next Scheduled Meeting August 10, 2023, 7:00 pm**

Respectfully submitted,

Susan K. McCann

Clerk