



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
Tom Soboleski

Alternate Member

Vacancy
Vacancy

Minutes of an Essex Conservation Commission meeting held on
October 12, 2023 in the Town Hall Kitchen.

1. K. Tucker called the meeting to order at 7pm. In attendance: F. Hall, M. Reeves, T. Soboleski, E. Stulga, K. Tucker. Absent: R. Helmecki, Excused Absence: J. O'Brien
2. Public Comments: None.
3. Review and Approve August 10, 2023 Meeting Minutes: T. Soboleski requested to remove the following sentence in Section B: Canfield Meadow Woods (found on page 2): "He mentioned that some towns use drones during emergencies, such as fighting fires." Since the reference was not meant to suggest local CT towns use drones, the request was made to remove it. With a motion by M. Reeves, and a 2nd by T. Soboleski, the amended minutes were approved.
4. Old Business to include trail reports and management issues in town preserves:
 - A. Bushy Hill Preserve: On September 28, All Habitat inspected the pond, found positive larvae dips and treated the area for mosquitoes. Two downed trees on the Blue Trail were reported to R. Helmecki and were cleared by him and J. O'Brien on October 3.
 - B. Canfield Meadow Woods: George Wendell of ELT told T. Soboleski about 2 trees in need of maintenance: 1) A rotted tree that fell flat across the trail and 2) A leaner tree. T. Soboleski believes he can cut and clear these trees. He explained that ELT has 3 stewards who walk and monitor the trails: himself, George Wendell, and Chuck Grusse.
 - C. Viney Hill Brook Preserve: F. Hall replaced trail maps at the VHBP kiosk. K. Tucker reported that on October 3, M. Reeves chain sawed through a rotted, moss-covered tree trunk on Forest Glade Trail while K. Tucker and E. Stulga cut back vegetative under-growth to open and widen the trail. Reeves also chain sawed two downed trees on the Upland Trail; F Hall assisted.

D. Discuss Viney Hill Brook Preserve October 3, 2023, On-Site Inspection & Recommendations:

M. Reeves stated that VHBP has deteriorated and does not meet the standards of the two other town-owned preserves or the Essex Land Trust managed properties. M. Reeves noted that the growing season is now longer than years ago and that a major clean-up is needed. Quarry Pond Trail needs widening, the vegetation is thigh high. M. Reeves asked commissioners to set priorities for maintaining the trails since the Essex Department of Public Works has allotted only 8 hours per month (divided between VHBP and Bushy Hill) for mowing, weed whacking and removing fallen trees as needed. Reeves asked commissioners to anticipate any and all needs in preparing our FY 2024-2025 Budget; requests will be due in January, 2024. Mark is concerned that the funds designated for professional mowing-maintenance will be removed from the commission's overall FY 2024-25 budget since the town crew, with first selectman's approval, has agreed to provide work on a trial basis from May-October. A definitive understanding between the ECC, EDPW, and First Selectman/Board of Finance is required prior to end of Fiscal Year 2023-24. F. Hall said that commissioners cannot be expected to provide all the additional labor needed to maintain town-owned preserves. M. Reeves will calculate the cost of materials needed to build an enlarged, permanent bog bridge on BroadWalk.

E. Other: On September 21, K. Tucker confirmed with Margot Burns of the RiverCog that ECC may contract with Howard Tree Service to fell the hazardous hemlock leaning over the Blue Trail at the Bushy Hill Preserve. Contracted cost \$600. These funds were awarded after the ECC applied for the grant sponsored by Guilford Savings Bank and coordinated by RiverCog.

E. Stulga will talk to Renee Fragola, Valley Regional High School, about organizing volunteers from Warriors in the Community for ECC projects.

6. New Business: K. Tucker requested, and Carey Duques, Inland/Wetlands Officer, agreed to pay the CT Association of Inland/Wetlands Commission dues for the ECC.

M. Reeves discussed a call he received regarding conservation easements on Foster Lane, Ivoryton. This easement is out of the ECC's purview and should be referred to the town clerk or zoning officer.

7. Financial Report YTD and Proposed Expenditures: R. Helmelcki was reimbursed \$209.62 for the Steil battery-operated hedge trimmer he purchased for the ECC. M. Reeves would like to purchase materials to build wider, more permanent bog bridges. T. Soboleski will look into the cost of electronic trail counters.

K. Tucker said we need to reimburse ELT \$250 for the Canfield Meadow Woods maps. With a motion by M. Reeves, and a 2nd by F. Hall, the reimbursement was approved.

8. Other: E Stulga and K Tucker agreed to widen and clear the Quarry Pond Trail at VHBP, on Tuesday, October 17. All commissioners are welcome to meet at the passive parking area VHBP, high noon.

9. Adjournment: With a motion by F. Hall, and a 2nd by M. Reeves, the meeting was adjourned at 8:24pm.

Next Scheduled Meeting November 9, 2023, 7:00 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Susan K. McCann
ECC Clerk