

**TOWN OF ESSEX
Conservation Commission**

29 West Avenue • Essex, Connecticut 06426
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Executive Board

*Kathleen Tucker, Chairman
Jeffrey Lovelace, Vice Chairman
Frank Hall, Secretary*

Regular Members

*Richard Helmecki
Adrienne Forrest
Robert Ward
Mark J. Reeves*

Alternate Member

Jerri MacMillian

Unapproved

Minutes

Regular Meeting

**Thursday, April 7, 2016 at 7:30 P.M.
Town Hall, 29 West Avenue - Room B**

The Essex Conservation Commission conducted their regularly scheduled meeting on April 7, 2016 in Room B of the Essex Town Hall.

Attending Members

Kay Tucker
Frank Hall
Richard Helmecki
Mark Reeves
Adrienne Forrest
Robert Ward

Absent Members

Jeffrey Lovelace
Jerri MacMillian

Staff: Stella Beaudoin, Recording Secretary

Audience: There were no audience members.

1. Call to Order

K. Tucker called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Seated for the meeting were K. Tucker, R. Helmecki, M. Reeves, A. Forrest, F. Hall, R. Ward.

2. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

3. Financial Reports

Fiscal Year End Contracts and Projections

K. Tucker reported that there is a remaining balance in the Conservation budget of \$3,205 as of March 31, 2016. This amount does not reflect a few miscellaneous expenses in the past week. The projected expenditures for the remainder of the fiscal year is as follows: Shirley Malcarne and Recording Clerk \$600; Miscellaneous lumber \$100; Contract with All Habitat services for DEEP permit \$350; Phragmite control \$500; Knotweed control \$800, for a total of \$1650 to All Habitat. K. Tucker stated that any of these services that are performed in this fiscal year, must be paid in this fiscal year. K. Tucker reported that Wind Mill Farms was paid \$732 last year and the projected mowing budget for this year is \$750.

Eli and Ben Clark, Clark's Custom Services will be allotted funding for 16 hours for the months of May and June for the widening of the trails and mowing of the grass at Viney Hill Brook Park. The aforementioned services will negate the \$3,200 remaining in the budget to a zero balance.

K. Tucker contacted Mike Callahan, Beaver Solutions, LLC who has agreed to meet with the Commissioners to discuss a plan for handling the beavers. K. Tucker indicated that she has requested authorization in the amount of \$320 to be disbursed from the escrow account for annual maintenance of the pond leveler pipe and exclusion fence.

K. Tucker asked Tom MacWhinney to submit his invoice for mowing services and brush removal.

4. Old Business

a. Status of Preserves

Bushy Hill

- Wolf Tree Condition:

K. Tucker referenced an April 4, 2016 email from Phil Miller in which he comments on the huge, dead branch on the Wolf Tree which is located on the south side of Bushy Hill Preserve entrance trail. The dead branch is supporting the weight of another twenty-foot, detached upper branch which has come to rest upon it. P. Miller stated his concern that the main branch could splinter all the way down the trunk causing massive damage. P. Miller stated that the main path of the preserve is an old, compacted and stable, wagon road, which will provide access for a truck. The same tree is also under siege from some taller and thinner encroaching, surrounding trees. These are preventing sunlight from reaching the crown of the much older Oak, potentially causing a tip die back. This is the same situation for the other large, old White Oak near the upper meadow. P. Miller suggested that that the tree could be immensely helped by volunteers cutting down the much smaller surrounding trees and volunteered to assist with that effort. K. Tucker noted that, according to P. Miller this Wolf Tree is the oldest, standing Wolf Tree in the State of CT and she suggested arranging a consultation with a professional arborist to determine the cost to remove the branch.

K. Tucker stated that she emailed and spoke with Jim Denham, Essex Land Trust (ELT). In 2008 the ELT asked the Conservation Commission to contribute \$500 toward the building of a kiosk, however the kiosk has yet to be constructed. K. Tucker requested that the ELT use a portion if not the entire amount of that \$500 to pay for the cost to take down the limb on the Wolf Tree.

F. Hall suggested contacting Bartlett Tree Service for a consultation.

R. Helmecki stated that Wilcox Tree Service previously cut down the large Tulip Tree in Viney Hill Preserve and they also cut back the other Wolf Tree for \$250. R. Helmecki stated that he will follow up Bartlett Tree Services and Wilcox Tree Service for consultation.

- Meadow Mowing Proposal

R. Helmecki met with First Selectman, Norm Needleman regarding the proposal to cut undergrowth to open up the meadow in the Bushy Hill Preserve. N. Needleman stated his approval and expressed willingness to extend the additional funds needed for the completion of this project. The cost breakdown is \$1150 to clear the brush in the first section; \$1850 for back part, and to cut brush and take out root bed in the back portion, and another \$570. K. Tucker noted that this is a modest price for the scope of this project. It was noted that with each

passing season that this job is left unattended, the area becomes more overgrown creating more work in the future.

K. Tucker and R. Helmecki cleared the trail at Bushy Hill Preserve, with chain saws and removed the tree that landed on a bridge. F. Hall and R. Helmecki repaired the footbridge, which they were able to accomplish in two trips to the bridge. R. Helmecki noted that there are two other footbridges that have rotted and are in need of repair and removal. The Commission is not maintaining those footbridges and R. Helmecki noted that if they are disassembled, they can be removed. The goal is to get one footbridge in usable condition again. R. Helmecki will send an email to commissioners seeking assistance with this project.

Viney Hill Brook

F. Hall reported that the pond leveler and the exclusion fence are in good order and they are working as designed. There has been minimal tree cutting by beavers at Viney Hill Brook and no further work on the fallen trees. F. Hall reported that someone has moved trees onto the trail on the east side of the pond. There are trees that are 3-4" in diameter that someone dragged across the trail. One had been dragged out of the water. F. Hall stated that those trees need to be cut up.

- Schedule Work Excursion

K. Tucker, R. Helmecki, F. Hall and R. Ward will meet at 1:00pm, Sunday, April 10, 2016 at Viney Hill passive parking area. Members will bring gloves, hand tools and chain saws.

Canfield Meadow Woods

- Environmental Review Team (ERT)

K. Tucker stated that the environmental review grant has been re-funded and Jean Davies is the new ERT Director. J. Davies is collecting her team to inventory the wildlife, etc., in Canfield Meadow Woods, and is looking to ascertain interests of the Conservation Commission. R. Ward will contact J. Davies and brainstorm ideas on how to proceed. The ERT will go into the area and inventory the wildlife, and habitat indigenous to that Preserve. J. Davies would like to know what the Conservation Commission recommends to be appropriate for grant funding, i.e., how can the trails be improved or better management of the woods. K. Tucker stated that the other ERT contact is Tanner Stevens of Deep River.

- Dogs

K. Tucker stated that there have been several incidents involving unleashed dogs, on the trails in Canfield Meadow Woods. K. Tucker prepared a press release which she distributed to members for review. M. Reeves stated that N. Needleman suggested placing an article in the Essex Events quarterly publication to convey the importance of "controlling your dog" when visiting public parks, and F. Hall suggested to post a similar article on the website, as well. R. Ward stated that there are people who are fearful of dogs and the message the Commission needs to convey is that if you are a runner, a biker or a hiker, one needs to know that they are sharing the trails with dogs and their owners.

K. Tucker will email the release to members who review and add their comments. Upon completion, R. Ward will forward to Essex Events for publication.

5. New Business

There was no new business.

6. Review and Approve February Meeting Minutes

MOTION made by F. Hall to approve the February, 2016 Regular Meeting Minutes with the following amendment; Page 4, under financial expenditures, last sentence; surrounding the beaver population at “*Viney Hill Brook Preserve*.” **SECONDED:** M. Reeves; **Voting In Favor:** K. Tucker, R. Ward, A. Forrest, F. Hall, R. Helmecki, M. Reeves; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None; **Approved:** 6/0/0.

7. Correspondence

K. Tucker commented on an email received from R. Ward and thanked him for his positive comments regarding the pristine condition of the trails and the water at Viney Hill Brook Park. R. Ward read his email into the record.

M. Reeves read into the record the Notice of Tentative Decision on Intent to Issue a State Permit and an Underground Injection Control Permit for Discharge into State of CT Waters, from the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection dated February 4, 2016. This DEEP notice was on an application submitted by Essex Glen, LLC under C.G.S. section 22a-430 for permit to discharge. This proposal is to discharge a maximum of 7,800 gallons per day of wastewaters to the groundwaters in the watershed of the Falls River watershed, from a twenty-six unit residential community. Essex Glen is situated on Bokum Road, Essex. The State rendered a tentative decision that the proposed system to treat the discharge would protect the waters of the State from pollution and the permit is being issued for the discharge to the groundwaters in the Falls River watershed. The requirement associated with the issuance of this permit is that all wastewater will be treated to meet the applicable effluent limitations, and periodic monitoring to demonstrate that the discharge will not cause pollution. K Tucker suggested that the Commission track the progress of this notice.

K. Tucker briefly spoke about the availability of grant money and asked commissioners to think about what potential grant funding to the Conservation Commission could go toward. R. Ward stated that he would like to look into the Commission obtaining permission and the rights to create a bike path that goes by the Lee Company. The railroad tracks are located on property which is a linear, 16-foot wide state park that goes through to Old Saybrook. R. Ward stated that he will gather information and present to the Commission at an upcoming meeting.

8. Adjournment

MOTION made by F. Hall to adjourn the regular meeting at 8:55pm to the next regularly scheduled meeting which will be conducted on May 5, 2016 at 7:30pm, Essex Town Hall, Conference Room B, 29 West Avenue, Essex, CT; **SECONDED** by M. Reeves; **Voting In Favor:** K. Tucker, R. Helmecki, M. Reeves, A. Forrest, R. Ward, F. Hall; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None; **Approved:** 6/0/0.

Respectfully submitted,

Stella C. Beaudoin
Recording Secretary