



TOWN OF ESSEX  
**Conservation Commission**

29 West Avenue • Essex, Connecticut 06426  
Telephone (860) 767-4340 • FAX (860) 767-8509

**Executive Board**

*Kathleen Tucker, Chairman*  
*Jeffrey Lovelace, Vice Chairman*  
*Adrienne Forrest, Secretary*

**Regular Members**

*Frank Hall*  
*Richard Helmecki*  
*Mark J. Reeves*  
*Jim O'Brien*

**Alternate Member**

*Roger Field*  
*Jacob Wlochowski*

**Unapproved**

**Minutes Regular Meeting**  
**Thursday, December 12, 2019 at 7:30**

The Essex Conservation commission conducted their regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday, November 14, 2019 in Room B of the Essex Town Hall.

**Attending Members**

K Tucker  
F Hall  
R Helmecki  
M Reeves  
J Lovelace  
J O'Brien  
A Forrest  
R Field, Alternate

**Absent Members**

J Wlochowski, Alternate

**Audience:** There were no audience members.

**1. Call to Order**

K Tucker called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM. Seated for the meeting were K Tucker, F Hall, R Helmecki, M Reeves, J Lovelace, J O'Brien, and A Forrest. Alternate, non-voting member, R Field seated for discussion only.

**1. Public Comment**

No public comment

**2. Review and Approve November 14, 2019 Meeting Minutes**

**Review:** Correction was made on page 2 under Bushy Hill Preserve and Oakledge Drive Access changing the bat house should be 12 feet off the ground.

**MOTION** made by J O'Brien to approve the Minutes of the November 14, 2019 meeting with the following amendment; 1) page 2, under Bushy Hill Preserve and Oakledge Drive Access, the bat house should be 12 feet

off the ground. **SECONDED** by M Reeves; **Voting in Favor:** K Tucker, F Hall, R Helmecki, M Reeves, J Lovelace, J O'Brien, A Forrest; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None; **Approved:** 7/0/0.

### 3. Election of Officers 2020

**MOTION** made by F Hall to nominate K Tucker as Chair of the ECC. **SECONDED** by M Reeves. **Voting in Favor:** F Hall, R Helmecki, M Reeves, J Lovelace, J O'Brien, and A Forrest; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None; **Approved:** 6/0/0.

**MOTION** made by M Reeves to nominate J Lovelace as Vice Chair of the ECC. **SECONDED** by J O'Brien. **Voting in Favor:** F Hall, K Tucker, R Helmecki, M Reeves, J O'Brien, and A Forrest; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None; **Approved:** 6/0/0.

**MOTION** made by R Helmecki to nominate A Forrest as Secretary of the ECC. **SECONDED** by M Reeves. **Voting in Favor:** F Hall, Tucker, R Helmecki, M Reeves, J Lovelace, and J O'Brien; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None; **Approved:** 6/0/0.

### 4. Review and Approve 2020 Scheduled Meetings

**MOTION** made by F Hall to approve the meeting schedule for 2020. **SECONDED** by J O'Brien; **Voting in Favor:** K Tucker, F Hall, R Helmecki, M Reeves, J Lovelace, J O'Brien, and A Forrest. **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None; **Approved:** 7/0/0.

### 5. Old Business

#### A. Bushy Hill Preserve and Oakledge Drive Conservation Easement Reports

M Reeves, F Hall, R Helmecki, R Field, and K Tucker met on November 20<sup>th</sup> at the parking area on Oakledge Drive where they cleared the entrance to Bushy Hill Preserve from the access entrance on the trail to the stream. They also moved trail markers to make them more visible. While there it was noted there were two recycle and two garbage cans positioned in the well-delineated town parking area for the preserve. Commissioners assumed it was trash day and the abutting homeowners were using the town parking area as a trash pick-up point. A letter was sent to the real estate agent for the home, currently for sale including a survey on the property so that potential buyers are aware of the boundary lines and the town's public access easement and parking area for Bushy Hill Preserve.

R Helmecki replaced a missing board from the Boy Scout Eagle Bridge at Bushy Hill. He also purchased more boards for later use. Someone from the Essex Land Trust also had noticed the missing board and was reporting it but R Helmecki was able to attend to it so the ELT did not need to do anything further. R Helmecki walked the trails and reported them in good condition.

R Field said Geoff Furntey, the Chief Steward of ELT, has a boring tool and is willing to demonstrate how to use it so the age of the two Wolf Trees in Bushy Hill can be determined. The tool can only bore 14" into the trunk. If the diameter of the trunk is more than 28", the age would have to be extrapolated from the borings that are taken. R Helmecki will set a time to meet with Mr. Furntey with J O'Brien and J Lovelace joining them.

#### A. Canfield Meadow Woods Preserve Report

R Field reported the large tree-top that broke off and landed near the observation platform in Canfield Meadow Woods has been cleaned up. Also, the 13 trees that had come down last month have all been cleared. There was evidence of human activity and of a trail bike and maybe a motor bike being used on the Green Trail. There were two sets of tire prints, one smaller than the other.

#### **B. Viney Hill Brook Preserve Report**

F Hall visited Quarry Pond this afternoon. It was sunny, cold but no wind. Exclusion fences and pond levelers on Quarry Pond and adjacent to ROW Rd are functioning properly. Broadwalk trail is blocked by a fallen tree SW of pond. There is evidence of beaver wood cache in front of the smaller lodge and beaver activity on west bank of pond. Trails were wet with a thin crust of ice.

J Lovelace walked around Quarry Pond. The copse of gray Birch trees are dead and bending. Gray birches have a lifetime of approximately 20 years; the gray birch trees in VHBP have reached their life time limit. There are some large Oak trees about 30 feet from the parking lot that appear to be rotted. There was a question about whether to leave them alone or ask the town to take them down. It was decided to let them be. Only one was considered a possible problem for the trail but R Field noted that when trees die they usually shed their crown straight down, then the limbs fall straight down leaving the trunk to stand until it eventually rots and falls over.

F Hall said the second beaver lodge on the west side looked like the dome has fallen in so it's possible the lodge is empty. There is, however, evidence of animal activity as there's a clear path that has been created.

#### **C. Discuss and Designate Fiscal Year Projects and Expenditures**

K Tucker said she contacted All Habitat, Services regarding treating for mosquitoes, ticks, and treatment for Phragmites but they have not yet returned her call. She wants to know if the mosquito treatment includes any special treatment that might be used to combat EEE.

A discussion followed about whether to have a paragraph describing where Phragmites and Japanese knotweed are located when submitting our budget needs. The visual would be more persuasive in asking for funds to be able to eliminate and continually monitor the areas to keep the invasive plants from reappearing.

It was also discussed whether to break down the budgeted items and include more detail: i.e., the expense for phragmite treatment, the expense to treat Japanese knotweed, and the expense to treat mosquitoes, rather than a total for the budget line item Maintenance and Equipment.

It was brought to our attention that the bigger Wolf Tree might do better if some of the taller trees behind it were topped or taken down completely. While doing that kind of tree work is too expensive for our Commission, the Town Tree Warden, Augie Pampel might have suggestions on maintaining the Wolf Trees. K Tucker said she would get in touch with him and make an appointment to show him the tree and discuss what to do. Whether we add it to our list of projects we might plan to do down the road will be determined by what Augie says.

#### **6. New Business**

The ELT has grappling equipment they would be happy to use to help us clear fallen trees and other detritus in the pond in Bushy Hill.

There was a discussion of bog bridges, how much they cost to build and maintain over time and should we change the materials we use to find something that lasts longer but would be more expensive. This is another item we might put on our project's list.

## 7. Financial Report

The budget for our Commission needs to be in order for our next meeting on January 17, 2020. We determined we need to request more funds to help with all the requirements of maintaining our preserves. K Tucker expects to have to ask the Office of Finance for an extension until February.

Clark's Custom Services (CCS) sends invoices months after the work has been done. It's difficult to keep track of what work is being billed when the invoices are months' late. J Lovelace will speak to CCS again about getting our bills within a month.

## 8. Adjournment

**MOTION** to adjourn was made by F Hall at 8:56 PM until the January 9, 2020 regularly scheduled meeting at 7:30 PM, Essex Town Hall, Conference Room B, 29 West Avenue, Essex, CT; **SECONDED** by J O'Brien; **Voting in Favor:** K Tucker, F Hall, R Helmecki, M Reeves, J Lovelace, J O'Brien, and A Forrest; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** None, **Approved:** 7/0/0.

Respectfully submitted,

Adrienne Forrest, Secretary  
and  
Stella Caione, Recording Clerk