

Essex Conservation Commission
Town of Essex
29 West Avenue
Essex, CT 06426

MINUTES

Regular Meeting – February 9, 2012

Call to Order

The Essex Conservation Commission conducted their regularly scheduled meeting on February 9, 2012 in Room B of the Essex Town Hall. Members in attendance were Kay Tucker, Chair, Susan Malan, Doug Demarest, Pam Bernardini, MaryAnn Pleva and Richard Helmecki. Also in attendance, Stella Beaudoin, Recording Secretary. Susan Malan was seated for Jeff Lovelace.

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

Election of Officers

Motion made by Doug Demarest to nominate Kay Tucker as the 2012 Chairperson for the Essex Conservation Commission.

Motion seconded by Richard Helmecki and passed unanimously.

Motion made by Doug Demarest to nominate Rich Helmecki as the 2012 Vice Chairperson for the Essex Conservation Commission.

Motion seconded by Pam Bernardini and passed unanimously.

Review and Approve the December 8, 2011 Meeting Minutes

Recommended changes to the Minutes are noted in italics:

Page 2, first line of the first paragraph: “*The Viney Hill Brook Park Essex Land Trust hike and plunge event sponsored by the Essex Park and Recreation Department* which occurred on Saturday November 26, 2011.”

Page 2, second paragraph: “....Maria Lucarelli, Administrative Assistant “*to the Board of Selectmen*”.

Page 3, fifth paragraph beginning: “Ms. Malan and Mr. Helmecki visited the site”, to be placed under trail reports for Bushy Hill Preserve Footbridges and Trails.

Page 3 under Canfield Meadow Woods, first sentence beginning: “Ms Malan reported that a large chunk came off the large *Tulip Poplar*” tree that has a marker on it.”

Page 3, under Canfield Meadow Woods, last sentence: “Susan Malan and Goody LeLash will coordinate with *Al Macgregor, Dana Hill and John Dube*’.”

Page 4, second paragraph: correction on the spelling of “*Fran Nolin*.”

Motion made by Doug Demarest to approve as amended the December 8, 2011 meeting Minutes.

Motion seconded by Pam Bernardini and passed unanimously.

Old Business

Bushy Hill Preserve

Rich Helmecki reported that he and Kay Tucker replaced the cracked and broken boards on two of the footbridges. Ms. Tucker commented that this was a difficult job and the expense was around \$78 for the boards. Ms. Helmecki noted that there are boards left remaining for future projects.

Ms. Tucker contacted Al Macgregor and he has agreed to utilize the walk-behind that is owned by the Essex Land Trust to mow the meadow. The Conservation Commission will pay for the use of the equipment.

Mr. Helmecki commented on the recent vandalism in Bushy Hill Park. The sticks on the markers on the blue trail in the Oakledge area were broken. Arrangements will be made for repair with Ron Nelson who is the steward for the Platt property. Mr. Helmecki suggested placing the markers on a tree. Mr. Helmecki will get together with Mr. Demarest and replace the public access signs.

Viney Hill Brook Park

Rich Helmecki proposed the installation of a bog bridge. Joe Budrow, Essex WEO/ZEO recommended elevating the road about one foot. Mr. Helmecki noted that that recommendation made by Mr. Budrow involved the entire trail. Mr. Helmecki referenced the connector from Broadwalk to Observation Rock noting that the area is extremely wet and a simple bridge would be easy to construct and would make access more passable. Mr. Lovelace had previously suggested laying down rocks in that area.

Doug Demarest suggested speaking with Dave Caroline to determine if the Essex Town Crew could assist with this project.

Mr. Helmecki indicated that Mr. Caroline previously installed a flexible pipe and placed wood chips in this area. It was noted that approval must be obtained from Joe Budrow prior to any construction.

Ms. Tucker suggested that members meet at the passive parking area on Sunday, February 12, 2012 at 9:00 a.m. to assess the area.

Canfield Meadow Woods

In 2008 the Essex Conservation Commission contributed \$500 for the construction of a kiosk. The kiosk was never constructed and the money remains with the Essex Land Trust. There are three entrances within Canfield Meadow Woods; one access is in Deep River, one access is on Dennison Road in Essex and one access is on Book Hill Woods Road in Essex. The \$500 will go toward the Dennison Road kiosk. It was noted that Al Macgregor will insure that the money is refunded to the Commission if the kiosk has not been constructed by the spring of 2012.

Ms. Malan reported that one of the first trails from Book Hill Woods Road in Canfield Meadow Woods is very messy. Ms. Malan offered to write to Dana Hill to address the clean-up.

Tulip Poplar Tree Proposal

Ms. Tucker commented on the portion of the Tulip Poplar tree that remains standing in Canfield Meadow Woods. An arborist from Bartlett Tree viewed the pictures Ms. Malan took of that tree and he advised that the top portion of the tree be sawed off where the rip occurred. A proposal will be obtained from Bartlett Tree to see if a treatment is advisable in order to keep the tree intact. This tree is situated on Town of Essex conservation land

Ms. Malan distributed to the members, pictures of the felled limb and the tree. Ms. Malan suggested that the Conservation Commission in partnership with the Essex Land Trust work with the Central CT Woodturners to sponsor an auction.

Kay Tucker, Jeff Lovelace, Susan Malan and Dana Hill met with George Upton, President of Central CT Woodturners Assoc. Mr. Upton stated that there was a good deal of wood associated with the felled limb and he indicated that he wanted to invite other clubs to participate in the process. Mr. Upton offered to give back pieces that could not be auctioned. There is a one-year aging process before the wood can be worked with. It was noted that the wood from the Tulip Poplar tree is too soft to be turned for furniture. It will be used for bowls, etc.

Ms. Malan suggested proposing this project to the Essex Land Trust noting a venture such as this would raise a good deal of awareness while engaging and educating the public.

Mr. Demarest indicated that if the limb were to remain intact, it would be interesting for people to see. Mr. Demarest stated that he would like for the limb to remain in place noting that the park should be interesting to people and retaining this massive limb would add to the interest and character of the park.

Ms. Tucker stated that this is a wonderful project and she noted over the years many people have come to the Conservation Commission with various worthwhile projects. Ms. Tucker expressed a concern over creating a precedent with this endeavor.

Ms. Pleva noted that the Conservation Commission does not need to create policy, but rather take it one project at a time.

Ms. Bernardini indicated that she likes the idea of using the Woodturners for this undertaking as it is a good way to bring the community together; this proposal does not abuse nature and it will perpetuate the life of the tree.

Mr. Helmecki stated that he would be amenable with either outcome.

Ms. Tucker indicated that a possible compromise would be to keep half of the limb in place and turn the other half over to the Woodturners.

Members will visit the site individually and look over the tree limb and will also view the messy trail at the Book Hill Woods entrance of Canfield Meadow.

Ms. Malan stated that it was suggested by John Dube' to contact the State of CT arborist and ask them to come in and discuss thinning the tree population and forest management.

Mr. Helmecki will contact Rob Rocks from the CT DEEP and ask him to come out and take a look at the Book Hill Woods entrance of Canfield Meadow to discuss forest management.

Review Maps

Ms. Malan distributed maps that CRERPA made for the Conservation Commission to review and mark up. Ms. Malan suggested that each person mark up their individual map and she will then take everyone's edit and have that combined onto one map. It was suggested that members conduct a map workshop.

Recap New Year's Day Walk

Ms. Tucker stated that in keeping with the past years, Conservation Commission members conducted their sixth annual New Year's day walk on January 1, 2012 at 10am. Eleven people participated in the walk including the First Selectman.

Expenditures

- Approved \$78 for the boards for the construction of the footbridges.
- Authorization of \$755 to Penniman and Assoc. for the Bushy Hill maps and that money was encumbered from 2010/2011 budget.
- Approved an expenditure of \$385 for Penniman and Assoc. for creating the Viney Hill Brook park maps

Other

- Ms. Pleva discussed the letter she sent to Joe Budrow regarding the recommendation of the Essex Zoning Commission to adopt the 2004 standards of the CT River Gateway Commission. The Gateway Commission will present to the Essex Planning Commission. Ms. Pleva will look into this and report back next meeting.
- Ms. Pleva inquired as to the process for making Susan Malan a regular member of the Conservation Commission in light of the recent vacancy by Goody LeLash.

Motion by MaryAnn Pleva to ask the First Selectman to move Susan Malan from alternate to a regular member position.

Motion seconded by Pam Bernardini and passed unanimously.

Ms Tucker will make a recommendation to the First Selectman.

- A brief discussion on the appointment of a Conservation Commission member as liaison to the Essex IWWC. Ms. Pleva expressed an interest in serving as the liaison. Further discussion tabled to the March 2012 meeting.
- Ms. Pleva suggested uncompleted projects and future projects and goals be placed on the March 2012 agenda.

New Business:

2012-2013 Budget

Ms. Tucker submitted to the Board of Selectmen on January 10, 2012 a proposed budget for 2012/2013. During the 2010/2011 budget a total of \$9872 was spent. Ms. Tucker requested for 2012, \$10,800 and to date the Commission has spent \$4,000 and will spend at least another \$1,000. Ms. Tucker noted that the Conservation Commission has \$6,000 left in this fiscal year. This will be utilized for ground maintenance. The request for the clerk is \$2,500. Ms. Tucker noted that the Commission is consistently under budget. The Board of Selectmen asked Ms. Tucker to decrease the budget for 2012/2013. Ms. Tucker stated that there is no way to anticipate how much money will be needed for clean up. Ms. Tucker discussed the need for additional funding for grounds maintenance to be included in the proposed 2012/13 budget. Ms. Tucker suggested a revision of \$5,000 under grounds maintenance which will bring the total budget request to \$9900.

Motion made by Doug Demarest to approve \$9900 as a total 2012/2013 budget.

Motion seconded by Susan Malan and passed unanimously.

Other

- Ms. Pleva asked members if they would be willing to begin the meetings at 7:00 p.m. Ms. Tucker asked to have this discussion tabled to the March meeting.
- Ms. Tucker presented the All-Habitat services contract for a second mowing on phragmites and they will do a final mowing in the spring. Ms. Tucker commented on a new invoice for the deep aquatic permit processing fee and management of phragmites along Quarry Pond. Ms. Tucker asked All-Habitat to look at the rest of the phragmite and Japanese Knotweed. The cost is \$3,500 dollar. If approved they will start in July 2012 and complete by May 31, 2013. Discussion tabled to the March 2012 meeting.
- Susan Malan will contact Rick Audet, Director of the Essex Park and Recreation Department to inquire where the route will be for a proposed mountain biking activity.
- Doug Demarest attended a meeting on February 3, 2012 called by First Selectman, Norm Needleman. Also in attendance was Dan Lapman, Essex IWWC Chair,

Michael Holmes, Essex Park and Recreation Chair, James Francis, Essex Board of Finance Chair, Susan Malen for Essex WPCA and Frances Nolan, Essex Town Clerk. Selectman Needleman discussed and emphasized a reduction of budgetary cost for the upcoming fiscal year. Mr. Demarest noted that the IWWC will have a meeting on Tuesday, February 14, 2012 relating to the Foxboro Point development. Jim Francis talked about the town finances and stated that he wishes to keep taxes down and things on an even keel. So far the budget workshops are going well. A representative from the Essex Housing Commission talked about expanding the number of available homes for those people in need of housing.

- Ms. Pleva stated that she is in favor of receiving her minutes via email.

Maryann Pleva left the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

Correspondence

- Aquarion Water Company is sponsoring an environmental awards program in recognition of outstanding volunteer efforts. Winners will receive a \$2500 grant. Students grades 9-12 can be awarded a \$4500 grant. The deadline for nominations is May 1, 2012. Ms. Malan commented on the group led by Jim Godsmen who is trying to clean up Sunset Pond. Ms. Malan asked if the Commission would consider nominating Mr. Godsmen.
- Mr. Helmecki and Ms. Tucker stated that they wish to continue receiving a hard copy of the Minutes mailed in a small envelope so as to save on postage. The remaining members will receive their minutes via email.
- Invoices over \$1000 require approval from First Selectman.

Adjournment

Motion made by Rich Helmecki to adjourn.

Motion seconded by Pam Bernardini and passed unanimously.

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Conservation Commission adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Stella C. Beaudoin
Recording Secretary

*The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Essex Conservation Commission is scheduled for March 8, 2012.