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TOWN OF ESSEX Conservation Commission

Executive Board

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

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Telephone (860) 767-4340 • FAX (860) 767-8509

Regular Members

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

Alternate Member

*Roger Field
Jacob Wlochowski*

Unapproved

Minutes Regular Meeting Thursday, April 8, 2021 at 7:30pm

The Essex Conservation Commission conducted their regularly scheduled meeting on April 8, 2021 at 7:30 p.m. via Zoom platform.

Attending Members

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

Absent Members

J Wlochowski
A Forrest

Staff: Stella A Caione, Recording Clerk.

Audience: Terry Stewart Essex Harbor Commission and Alexander Gatto, Boy Scout.

1. Call to Order

K Tucker called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm. Seated for the meeting were K Tucker, F Hall, J Lovelace, J O'Brien, M Reeves, R Helmecki and Roger Field for A Forrest.

2. Public Comments

There was no public comment.



3. Review and Approve March 11, 2021 Meeting Minutes

MOTION made by J O'Brien to approve the Minutes of the March 11, 2021 meeting with the following amendment; 1) Roger Field did not participate in any votes at this meeting; **SECONDED** by J Lovelace; **Voting in Favor:** K Tucker, J Lovelace, F Hall, J O'Brien, M Reeves, R Helmecki; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining** None; **Approved:** 6/0/0. No Further Discussion.

4. Old Business to Include:

A. Invasive Species Removal Proposed Project Canfield Meadow Woods

Roger Field introduced guest speaker, Alexander Gatto, Boy Scout. A. Gatto has identified a need at Canfield Meadow Woods Preserve that involves removal of invasives. Alex Gatto outlined what he has discovered, where the invasives are located and how to rectify the situation. Alex Gatto reported that he found Bittersweet as the most predominant invasive and also identified Mustard plant and other invasives, growing all around the pavement near the Dennison Road entrance. He is seeking permission to remove them. Alex proposes to pull them up and place in bags to stop the spread. He noted that he will go 50 feet into the woods to locate and dispose of the invasives, and if deep rooted, will extract using a shovel, and also by hand.

Alex stated that he will wait for the Bittersweet vines to dry out before disposal or take them to dump. Alex plans on moving forward with this plan sometime in early June.

Kay Tucker asked if the invasives would be demarcated prior to removal. Roger Field stated that the plants are fairly robust and noted that he is not certain that marking the plants is the best way to proceed. Jeff Lovelace agreed with Roger Field.

R Helmecki stated that the Mustard plants are also situated at Bushy Hill along the entrance.

Roger Field asked if there is anything required from the ECC to document what he has done related to removal of the invasives. It was noted that the meeting minutes would serve to confirm this project for Alex.

Jeff Lovelace asked for "before" and "after" photographs and asked Alex to present the photos to the ECC after the project has been completed.

MOTION made by Jim O'Brien that the Essex Conservation Commission endorse Alex Gatto, Boy Scout, invasive species removal proposed project at Canfield Meadow Woods, with details of the project, as discussed at the April 8, 2021 ECC meeting. Alex Gatto will return to the ECC after the project is completed and provide before and after photos; **SECONDED** by J Lovelace; **Voting in Favor:** K Tucker, J Lovelace, F Hall, J O'Brien, M Reeves, R Helmecki; **Opposed:** None;



Abstaining None; **Approved:** 6/0/0. No Further Discussion.

B. Viney Hill Brook Preserve Review Boundaries Passive Parking Area and Quarry Trail

K Tucker wrote a letter to welcome the new property owners of 8 Hillside Dr., whose property adjoins the passive parking area and a portion of the Quarry Pond Trail. A meeting between the property owners, K Tucker and J Lovelace, was scheduled for Saturday, April 3, to walk the boundaries between the town-owned and private property.

Previous to the April 3rd meeting, J Lovelace and K Tucker met with Robert Doane, P.E. and discussed the 2003 Donald Carlson property survey of Bushy Hill Preserve. J Lovelace and K Tucker walked the boundary lines on April 2nd to identify the boundary markers. Jeff showed commissioners a map of the boundaries, where the concrete survey markers were visible. The property owners of 8 Hillside Drive stated that they are in favor of what the ECC is trying to accomplish and noted that they have cleared some brush on their vacant Lot, and have planted several Spruce trees as privacy screening.

C. Schedule Distribution of New Bog Bridges

K Tucker stated that three bog bridges on Broadwalk at Viney Hill Brook Preserve need replacing. M Reeves offered to deliver the bridges to Viney Hill and meet members on site on Tuesday April 13th at 11:30 A.M. M Reeves will bring 4 new bridges, salvage old bridges if they are repairable, and dispose of those bridges that are rotted.

D. Update on "Essex Events" Project

Frank Hall reported that he wrote and successfully submitted to Essex Events an article plus photos on the preserves for which the Conservation Commission is responsible.

E. Trail Conditions and Management

1. Bushy Hill Preserve

a. Entrance Trail and Gravel Distribution

R Helmecki stated that stone was delivered by Haynes Materials Deep River for distribution over the muddy, rutted areas at the far end of the entrance trail to Bushy Hill Preserve. The agreed upon instructions for delivery were not followed. Instead the stone was dumped in the parking area, which impeded public access to the preserve. R Helmecki, R. Field, and K Tucker, hand-distributed (wheel barrow by wheel barrow) the stone to the muddy area and spread 2 tons of stone.

b. Other



R Helmecki reported that so many visitors came to Bushy Hill Preserve when he and Kay Tucker were spreading stone along the entrance trail that the parking area was full, and people parked on the street and on adjoining private property. It was a “zoo.”

Terry Stewart thanked Richard Helmecki for the improved trail at the Bushy Hill entrance. T Stewart commented on the western blue trail that has been cleared out, and questioned what the ECC’s plans are for that cleared area. J Lovelace stated that the area has been professionally mowed but that areas of the meadow are wet, and the ground is dense and inaccessible. J Lovelace stated that the ECC discussed creating a perimeter trail around the meadow area. K Tucker stated that this area was part of a land management project originally initiated by former commissioner Carl Kaufmann. The intention was to provide an open meadow for birds and other wildlife. The land throughout this preserve is all forested. T Stewart stated that the Essex Land Trust (ELT) had some ideas about the feasibility of creating a new trail. Stewart stated that there is a lot of potential in that area. The area referenced is on town property and managed by the ECC. Bob Nussbaum will present more detail at the ECC May meeting.

2. Canfield Meadow Woods

R Field stated that the trails are in good shape. A Black Birch tree came down last week and R Field cleared the trail of the debris. The ELT plans to place two benches: one at the Nussbaum Memorial viewing platform, and one along the Margaret Canfield trail. R Field will let the Essex Conservation Commission know if their assistance is needed installing the benches.

3. Viney Hill Brook Preserve

F Hall reported that he and Dana Hill walked around Quarry pond. F Hall, checked the pond leveler pipes and noted that the drainage was good. They then went to the upper red trail to the upland woodlands trail, to the Forest Glade, and around Tucker Pond. F Hall stated that the water was higher than the last time he was there. The trails appear to be in good shape. The town crew mowed the Cedar Grove on April 2.

K Tucker reported that Mike Callahan, Beaver Solutions, asked for access through the gate to the CL&P right-of-way in order to inspect the beaver diversion equipment at Wollocks Pond. The gate currently has a combination lock. Callahan will contact CL&P for further information on access. Tucker asked Beaver Solutions to contact Mary Ellen Barnes, Director of the Park and Recreation Department, when inspections are scheduled for Wollocks Pond. Wollocks Pond is in the active area of the park and managed by P & R.

J Lovelace noted that on a recent visit a photographer alerted him to a large Osprey, perched in



a dead tree in the Cedar Grove meadow.

Dennis Robida noted to K Tucker that there was a weigh station, where the kiosk is situated on the abandoned road, when the entire area was an active sand and gravel quarry.

b. Other

There was no other business.

5. New Business

There was no new business.

6. Financial Report and FY 2021-22 Budget

K Tucker reported that it is possible for the ECC to order materials through the Essex Public Works Department. The ECC can transfer funds (for cost of the material) from its annual budget to the department of public works. The selectman was asked if the Public Works Department could deliver the materials. Kay asked the ECC to consider approving additional funds for gravel for the Bushy Hill Preserve entrance trail. R Helmecki suggested that the ECC see how the recently distributed stone holds up before authorizing this expense.

K Tucker reported that \$8400 remaining in FY 2020-21 budget; other expenses have been earmarked with disposable funds of \$1800-\$2000 remaining. Commissioners determined that the remaining funds not be directly allocated at this time. Additional mowing or tree removal may be necessary by the end of June, and the ECC will require funds for these services.

K Tucker suggested that IWWC enforcement officer Robert Doane, P.E., reestablish and mark the inland wetlands between the town's property around Quarry Pond Trail and the abutting property owners.

J Lovelace asked for authorization to speak with R Doane, P.E., concerning the boundary lines. K Tucker stated that R Doane would charge \$500 for his services. The 8 Hillside Drive property owners will likely contribute to the expenditure if approved.

7. Other

There was no other business.

8. Adjournment



MOTION made by F Hall to adjourn at 8:51 PM until the May 13, 2021 regularly scheduled meeting; meeting site TBD; **SECONDED** by J O'Brien; **Voting in Favor:** K Tucker, J Lovelace, F Hall, J O'Brien, M Reeves, R Helmecki; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining** None; **Approved:** 6/0/0. No Further Discussion.

Respectfully submitted,

Stella A. Caione

Stella A. Caione, Recording Clerk

