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TOWN OF ESSEX
Conservation Commission

Executive Board

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

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

Regular Members

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

Alternate Member

Roger Field

Unapproved

Minutes Regular Meeting

Thursday, May 13, 2021 at 7:30pm

The Essex Conservation Commission conducted their regularly scheduled meeting on May 13, 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 seated for A Forrest

Absent Members

A Forrest

Staff: Stella A Caione, Recording Clerk.

Audience: Terry Stewart, Essex Land Trust and Bob Nussbaum, Essex Land Trust.

1. Call to Order

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

K Tucker reported that Jake Wlochowski, alternate member, resigned on April 7, 2021.

2. Public Comments



There was no public comment.

3. Review and Approve April 8, 2021 Meeting Minutes

MOTION made by M Reeves to move review of the April 8, 2021 Minutes, to above New Business; **SECONDED** by F Hall; **Voting in Favor:** K Tucker, J Lovelace, F Hall, J O'Brien, M Reeves, R Helmecki, R Field; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining** None; **Approved:** 7/0/0. No Further Discussion.

4. Old Business to Include:

A. Essex Land Trust Proposed New Trail Presentation Bushy Hill Preserve

Bob Nussbaum, Essex Land Trust and Terry Stewart, trail steward for Essex Land Trust portion of Bushy Hill Preserve, presented to discuss the Bushy Hill and Platt proposed new trail. R Nussbaum stated that the Winthrop Hill area is widely comprised of wetlands, and there is no activity surrounding that entrance. Mr. Nussbaum suggested an alternate trail addition. He noted that there is sufficient open, dry ground on the town-owned property which would not disturb the Mountain Laurel and would create another half mile of new trail. The ELT stewards propose installation of two, 8-10 foot bridges to cross the stream in two places. This proposed trail will offer new views of the Falls River and will bring the combined trail systems up to approximately 5 miles. Terry Stewart, Bob Nussbaum and Kay Tucker had walked the area last week. The foot bridges would be used to cross over to the yellow trail and come back out on the green trail. This offers an opportunity and potential to open another entrance and trail. The Essex Land Trust offered aid in trail cutting and bridge construction.

K Tucker stated that she enjoyed the walk and noted that there were parts of the trail that were gnarly with exposed roots. There were a number of wildflowers, and the land was pristine. Ms. Tucker stated a concern that even though it would give a total of 5 miles of trail for humans, we would be going over land that, up until now, is undisturbed. There is a very small parking area, and Kay expressed concern that this trail would draw more people with limited available parking. Kay further expressed concern about installing bridges in this pristine area and the wooden structures could impact on the wild life.

It was recommended that the commissioners walk the site. Members will meet at the parking area on Friday, May 21 at 3pm.

B. Signage

Adrienne Forrest sent a template to Computer Signs which will indicate: "No Public Access" Town of Essex logo, and "Boundary Line". The markers invoiced out at over \$9 each. K Tucker will obtain another quote. There was discussion on preference related to the fabrication of the sign: plastic vs metal.



MOTION by J O'Brien to authorize spending of up to \$250 for signage. **SECONDED** by J Lovelace; **Voting in Favor:** K Tucker, J Lovelace, F Hall, J O'Brien, M Reeves, R Helmecki, R Field; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining** None; **Approved:** 7/0/0. No Further Discussion.

C. Report on Bog Bridge Distribution

M Reeves reported that he, F Hall, R Field and K Tucker, put the bog bridges in place, with assistance from Dennis Robida, citizen volunteer. Bridges were placed at the intersection of Broadwalk, and the team repaired one by the Scout Bridge. It was recommended to replace/repair the bridge below the dam at Tucker Pond. J O'Brien, F Hall and R Helmecki will meet M Reeves on Wednesday, May 19th at 10:00 am at the passive parking lot, to assist with distribution of a few additional bridges.

D. Trail Conditions and Management

1. Bushy Hill Preserve

R Helmecki stated that he walked Bushy Hill Preserve a few weeks ago and everything looked good. K Tucker reported that there is a good deal of invasive garlic mustard and barberry growing at the entrance trail on the left-hand side, which she and R Helmecki will remove. Ms. Tucker stated that there are lost and found items that she placed in a pile near the kiosk which she would like to dispose of.

J Lovelace stated that he walked Bushy Hill and noted that the pond is in good shape. Lovelace stated that a Bushy Hill Preserve neighbor has placed concrete blocks and boards to create a barrier across their own driveway. The reason: to prevent people, who are coming to hike Bushy Hill Preserve and find the 4-car parking area full, from trespassing by parking on the abutting neighbors' private property. The commission will explore options to remedy this issue.

J Lovelace would like Clark's Custom Services to do a perimeter mow around the big field that the ECC previously cleared. Members will look at the site on May 21.

2. Canfield Meadow Woods

a. Invasive Species Removal Projects

R Field stated that two felled trees have been cleared. R Field reported that Alex Gatto, Boy Scout, worked on the Dennison Road trailhead of the Canfield Preserve invasive vegetation project. Alex extracted both garlic mustard and barberry plants. Last weekend ELT volunteers met at the Book Hill Woods trail head and pulled about 300 lbs. of garlic mustard. That area is cleaned out and in good shape. There is an issue with disposal of garlic mustard. R Field questioned if a composter would create a high enough temperature to kill the seeds. R Field stated that he researched the disposal of garlic mustard and found a website out of Ontario, Canada, which suggested polarizing the mustard seed by setting uprooted plants in black plastic bags, allowing the plants to bake in the



sun for two or three weeks to kill the seeds. R Field stated that he requested additional help and there are two new volunteer stewards, Tom Soboleski and Chuck Crusse.

3. Viney Hill Brook Preserve

F Hall reported that on May 12th he walked the active and passive areas, looked at Quarry and Wollock's pond, and noted that the exclusion fences and all pond levelers are working as designed. The water is flowing well. The trails are passable and clear of any debris, however they do not appear to have been cleared recently. The Phragmite patch has been weed whacked; trail maps at the kiosk are empty and need refilling. Mr. Hall observed a family of Canada geese in the water and turtles sunning on the rock in Quarry Pond.

b. Other

K Tucker thanked F Hall for his work on the Essex Events article. F Hall thanked R Field and R Helmecki for their input. F Hall stated that he reviewed the Essex Conservation Commission page on the Town's website, and recommended adding a photo on the main page. F Hall reviewed the pamphlets for each of the preserves and noted that they were outdated. Would be best to put updates in a Word format for easier reading. J Lovelace will pursue suggestions.

5. New Business

Review and Approve April 8, 2021 Meeting Minutes

MOTION made by J Lovelace to approve the Minutes of the April, 2021 meeting with the following amendment; 1) Page 5, under financial report, 3rd sentence to read; "Selectmen *should be* asked if the public works department could deliver the materials"; **SECONDED** by J O'Brien; **Voting in Favor:** K Tucker, J Lovelace, F Hall, J O'Brien, M Reeves, R Helmecki, R Field; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining** None; **Approved:** 7/0/0. No Further Discussion.

6. Financial Report and FY 2021-22 Budget

K Tucker reported that there is an \$8,301 balance as of the end of April 2021, left remaining in FY 2020-21 budget. Year-to-date, ECC has contracted \$5,100 for the year with Clark's Custom Services, and expended \$3,100 through end of April, which does not include the \$500 invoice. There is then \$7,800 left available through June 30. Kay noted that the ECC contracted with All Habitat for \$2,500, for Bushy Hill mosquito treatment, and \$1200 for VHBP phragmite treatment. Clerk services for May and June should be approximately \$300. The ECC needs to pay an additional \$2,000 to meet the budget for Clark's Custom Services, bringing the budget balance to \$6,000, with \$1,800 left remaining in the budget. \$250 of that balance will be expended on signage, leaving \$1,550.

Jobs that need to be completed would include authorization of a certain amount of hours to Clark's Custom Services to clear the berm around the pond Bushy Hill; \$500 for Doane Engineering LLC to



demarcate the boundary lines; Services of a professional arborist to come in and trim the dead limb on the Wolf tree and to provide nutrient to the tree. Money is needed for materials to demarcate the parking area with more gravel and extensions. Money is needed for purchase of lumber. Kay stated that her priority is to earmark money for Doane Engineering to create boundary line, marking the line from the passive parking lot and around Quarry Pond at Viney Hill Brook Preserve.

MOTION by M Reeves set aside \$1,000 for survey and marking of boundaries of eastern side of Bushy Hill parking lot, and, to empower the chair to contact R Doane to prepare a formal estimate to do that work; **SECONDED** by J Lovelace; **Voting in Favor:** K Tucker, J Lovelace, F Hall, J O'Brien, M Reeves, R Helmecki, R Field; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining** None; **Approved:** 7/0/0. No Further Discussion.

MOTION by M Reeves to allocate unencumbered money and apply to either; 1) maintenance, mowing/clearing; 2) for material for future bog bridges. **Discussion:** Kay stated that another possibility for the allocation of the unencumbered money should be used toward hiring a professional arborist to look at the Wolf Tree, Bushy Hill Preserve.

MOTION by M Reeves to amend previous motion to include allocate unencumbered money and apply to either/and; 1) maintenance, mowing/clearing; 2) for material for future bog bridges, or; 3) retain services of an arborist to look at the Wolf tree. **SECONDED** by J O'Brien; **Voting in Favor:** K Tucker, J Lovelace, F Hall, J O'Brien, M Reeves, R Helmecki, R Field; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining** None; **Approved:** 7/0/0. No discussion.

ECC Budget request for 2021-2022 was \$13,250. The Selectmen and Board of Finance decreased the coming fiscal year budget by \$1,125. ECC 21-22 Budget total: \$12,125.

7. Other

Essex Land Trust has installed a flexible pipe and built an exclusion fence in the Falls River on Ivory Street in Ivoryton which borders the Mill Race land.

K Tucker reported on a book by Suzanne Simard, entitled, Finding The Mother Tree; Ms. Simard puts forward scientific evidence that trees send out mitochondrial fungus to surrounding trees, especially during their long, dying process, which benefits the forest.

J Lovelace reported that he and K Tucker recently spent an afternoon at a town hall conference where 12 UConn Juniors, in a Landscape Architectural program, presented unique versions for creating a pocket park at 181 Route 154 which is a privately owned vacant, one-acre property bordering the CT River.

8. Adjournment



MOTION made by M Reeves to adjourn at 9:21 PM until the June 10, 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, R Field; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining** None; **Approved:** 7/0/0. No discussion.

Respectfully submitted,

Stella A. Paione

Stella A. Caione, Recording Clerk

