

B .



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 Special Meeting

Thursday, June 15, 2021 at 7:30pm

The Essex Conservation Commission conducted a special meeting on June 15, 2021 at 7:30 PM, Essex Town Hall Auditorium.

Attending Members

K Tucker
A Forrest
F Hall
R Helmecki
M Reeves
J O'Brien

Absent Members

J Lovelace
R Field

Call to Order

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

Public Comments

There was no public comment.

Review and Approve May 13, 2021 Meeting Minutes

MOTION made by M Reeves to approve the Minutes of the May 13, 2021 meeting with following amendments: 1) Page 2, Section 4, second line, change to "Bushy Hill Preserve, discussed the Bushy Hill and Platt proposed new trail." 2) The fourth line should read "surrounding the Winthrop Hill entrance." 3) The second paragraph under Section 4, last word should be one word—"wildlife";



SECONDED by J O'Brien; **Voting in Favor:** K Tucker, F Hall, J O'Brien, M Reeves, R Helmecki; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining:** A Forrest; **Approved:** 5/0/0. No Further Discussion.

Discuss Bushy Hill Preserve Proposed New Trail

On May 21st at 3:00 PM, K. Tucker, F. Hall, R. Helmecki, M. Reeves, R. Field, J. Lovelace and ELT representatives B. Nussbaum, M. Stacks and guest, Cynthia Field, met and walked the proposed new trail, uncut but flagged with orange ribbons. The group bushwhacked over vegetation, around trees and crossed a small stream twice. The proposed trail is on town-owned property which the ECC oversees. The land where the trail is proposed has lots of potential and was considered worth doing if the ELT offers regular help. R Helmecki is concerned about the parking area allotted for Bushy Hill Preserve. Due to demand and limited parking, hikers have parked on neighboring property. Parking on the road is allowed, but people feel uncomfortable doing that because of the road traffic. The parking issue needs to be addressed before opening a new trail. K. Tucker commented that the land over which the trail is proposed is pristine and expressed concern that people using the area with their pets, especially dogs in the stream, would be detrimental to this now rustic open-space. The topic was tabled until the parking issue can be resolved and commissioners can study what impact people and their pets would have on the land and waterways.

MOTION made by M Reeves to write a letter to the ELT informing their representatives that the new trail project has been tabled until the parking issue is resolved and a study is undertaken to assess what impact hikers and their pets would have on the land and waterways. The ECC 2021-22 budget is less than the ECC 2020-21 budget; the ECC must reconsider taking on more projects with less funding for the preserves they manage"; **SECONDED** by F Hall; **Voting in Favor:** K Tucker, F Hall, A Forrest, J O'Brien, M Reeves, R Helmecki; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining** None; **Approved:** 6/0/0. No Further Discussion.

Financial Report and Proposed Expenditures

There was discussion of the fiscal year-end budget. After subtracting the money owed and money encumbered, the commission would be left with \$1,344. Of that, it was determined \$300 would be needed for printing maps, \$400 would be needed to clear the berm in Bushy Hill Preserve, and \$300 for mowing a circular swath in the open meadow in Bushy Hill. After those expenditures, \$344 would be left.

MOTION made by M Reeves to use the \$344 to purchase materials to construct new bog bridges; **SECONDED** by J O'Brien; **Voting in Favor:** K Tucker, F Hall, A Forrest, J O'Brien, M Reeves, R Helmecki; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining** None; **Approved:**6/0/0. No Further Discussion.

Old Business to Include:

A. Signage:

The ECC Contracted with Signs + Digital Graph X of Deep River for 30 trail marking signs to read Town of Essex Boundary No Public Access. The cost is \$210.



B. Trail Reports and Maintenance

1. Bushy Hill Preserve

A. Trails

The entrance needs mowing and the briars are encroaching onto the trails. Parking area looks good but the entrance to the conservation land is overgrown. The timbers to control water run-off and erosion that were installed fifteen years ago are exposed and could potentially cause a hazard because they are raised above the trail. However, there are no ruts in the trails from running water or any soil erosion.

The Falls River is running well. R Helmecki suggested we extend the red trail markers further along the Falls River bank as it is very scenic. The yellow trail is a bit rough with roots and rocks sticking out. There is also vegetation growing from the roots. R Helmecki will keep an eye on it.

K Tucker reported the chain was down at the entrance at Bushy Hill on May 21. She requested that the police alert the ECC if they notice that the chain is not in place.

2. Canfield Meadow Woods

R Field forwarded a report in which he indicated that there were four downed trees removed from across a couple of trails over the past reporting period. A replacement kiosk at Dennison RD is scheduled to be installed within a few weeks. There is a disease affecting the all Beech trees; there is no cure according to Essex Tree Warden Augie Pampel. A Pampel advised that we can expect to lose many of the younger trees.

3. Viney Hill Brook Preserve

The following observations were reported: Area around Tucker Pond was overgrown and not passable. Professional maintenance needed for Quarry Pond and Broadwalk trails. Up-land and Forest Glade trails were well maintained. Maps for kiosk need replenishing.

Essex resident Dennis Robida asked permission to inconspicuously mark the Foxglove flowers growing in the cedar grove meadow. Permission granted. Grasses seen in the Wildflower Meadow; native wild-flowers within meadow have not yet appeared.

All Habitat Services, LLC., will treat the phragmites, as contracted, soon.

Bog Bridge Distribution and Eagle Scout Bridge Repair

M Reeves, R Helmecki, F Hall, and R Field distributed the remaining four bog bridges and replaced two rotted boards in the Eagle Scout Bridge.



Other

R Helmecki reported on the Asian Nematode which is killing Beech trees. There is nothing available to save the trees, creating a huge loss.

J Lovelace reported that he updated the Town Web-site town-owned preserves brochure and updated the directions to the preserves as well.

A Forrest mentioned an app called "Picture This" which gives an instant identification of any tree/shrub/flower/weed when you take a photo. The app is free to try for a week but costs \$39 +/- per year after that. F Hall also mentioned Google Lens which does the same thing; it's free and also has advertising.

New Business

There was no new business.

Other

There was no other business.

Adjournment

MOTION made by J O'Brien to adjourn at 9:00 PM until the July 8, 2021 regularly scheduled meeting; meeting will be conducted at the Essex Town Hall, 29 West Avenue, Essex, CT 06426; **SECONDED** by M Reeves; **Voting in Favor:** K Tucker, F Hall, A Forrest, J O'Brien, M Reeves, R Helmecki; **Opposed:** None; **Abstaining** None; **Approved:** 6/0/0. No Further Discussion.

Respectfully submitted,

Adrienne Forrest, ECC Secretary

Stella A. Caione, Recording Clerk

