

**Town of Chester
Conservation Commission Meeting
April 9, 2024
6:00 p.m.
Draft Minutes**

Broadcast on Channel 6 and streamed on Government (cablecast.tv) – click “Watch Now”

Members present:

Chair Victor Chouinard
Kristina Snyder
Deb Munson
Kathleen Neff Ragsdale
Rick Sibley
Nick Tranquillo
Mikael Cejtin, Alternate

Members absent:

Ted Broadwater
Eric McGowan, Alternate
Selectwoman Dana Theokas, Liaison

Guests present:

Chester PACT

I. Call to Order

Chair Chouinard called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. New Business/Updates

A. Reschedule May ConsCom Meeting

The Commission discussed rescheduling the May meeting, due to a conflict with the Town Elections, and changed it to May 13th.

B. Beaver Dams and Pond Levelers

Chair Chouinard spoke with Supervisor of Roads Piper about two roads of concern due to the presence of beaver impoundments, one of which is Candia Road. Chuck Crowe of BestWay Wildlife Control provided an estimate to the Town to install pond levelers. Chair Chouinard noted that Conservation funds cannot be used on non-Conservation land. If the Warrant Article passes regarding establishing a conservation easement on the Candia Road parcel, Conservation funds could pay for installing the levelers.

Mr. Cejtin said he spoke with Moosewood Ecological, who expressed a desire to factor installing pond levelers into the work they are doing and asked to be kept updated.

Ms. Snyder noted there are nonprofit organizations that will fund work like this on private land and Chair Chouinard will notify Mr. Piper.

C. North Woods Survey Work: Update and Payment Approval

Chair Chouinard said Eric Mitchell reported that research and survey recon has begun. Mr. Mitchell submitted an invoice for \$4,830 for survey work done up to this point at the North Woods.

Mr. Tranquillo moved to approve payment to Eric C. Mitchell & Associates of \$4,830.00 for North Woods survey work. Ms. Neff Ragsdale seconded the motion. A vote was taken. The motion passed unanimously.

D. NRI, North Woods Ecological Survey and Open Space Master Plan: Update, Status of Permission Requests, and Recon Parcels for Moosewood

Mr. Tranquillo reported Moosewood is about to begin their fieldwork for the NRI. He shared information regarding the number of parcels they have received permission to access, including both private and Town-owned acreage. The Commission discussed members learning what Moosewood wants to identify, then conducting surveys to ensure all available land is surveyed and also save Commission funds. This would also be an opportunity for Commission members to meet private landowners. Chair Chouinard shared a spreadsheet of the properties involved. The members agreed to review the list and consider this proposal.

E. Business Cards

Town Administrator Doda informed Chair Chouinard that the Town voted to establish a Conservation Commission in 1971. This will be reflected on the business cards.

F. Easement Language Update Workshop

Mr. Tranquillo said due to personal commitments, and hence having lack of time to prepare, he asked to reschedule the workshop to May 2024. The Commission agreed. Chair Chouinard noted the Commission does not intend to record any new easements without the new language, unless it is an emergency. He urged the members to prepare before the workshop. Draft language will be composed at the workshop and then reviewed by counsel.

III. Regular Business

A. Minutes Approval

March 12, 2024

On line 248, change \$4,025 to \$3,025. On line 293, change IV to VI.

Mr. Tranquillo moved to approve the minutes of the March 12, 2024, meeting as amended. Ms. Neff Ragsdale seconded the motion. A vote was taken. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Treasurer's Report

Ms. Neff Ragsdale presented the Treasurer's Report for March:

Conservation account:

\$ 84.93 starting balance
24.60 expenditures
\$ 60.33 closing balance (6% of budget)

Savings account:

\$ 54,778.53 starting balance
135.12 interest
\$ 54,913.65 closing balance

Conservation Forestry account:

\$ 1,528.69 starting balance
3.88 interest
\$ 1,532.57 ending balance

Emerson Conservation Easement:

\$ 296.90 starting balance
00.75 interest
\$ 297.65 ending balance

Conservation Forestry CD: (5.35%)

\$ 42,427.46 starting balance
179.68 interest
\$ 42,607.14 ending balance

Emerson Conservation Easement CD: (5.35%)

\$ 10,606.86 starting balance
44.92 interest
\$ 10,651.78 ending balance

Regular Conservation account CD: (5.35%)

\$ 561,888.21 starting balance
2,379.58 interest
\$ 564,267.79 ending balance

Conservation account CD:

\$ 183,091.84 starting balance

776.94 interest

\$ 183,868.78 ending balance

Ms. Munson moved to accept the March Treasurer's Report as presented. Mr. Tranquillo seconded the motion. A vote was taken. The motion passed unanimously.

C. Spring Hill Farm

Ms. Snyder has been elected chair of the Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee (SHFAC). She said Winter Fest was very successful and the Nature Walk was well attended. She hopes more children and families will attend in the future. Mr. Tranquillo suggested having Moosewood regularly conduct a nature walk at this event and at the Fall Fest.

One of the main goals of the SHFAC this year is to create a trail up the hill behind the farmhouse. The Commission discussed the benefits of such a trail.

Ms. Snyder said they discussed doing a survey to inform the public about Spring Hill Farm and to get them involved.

The SHFAC should receive two final versions of the NRI report from Moosewood, one redacted to eliminate endangered species, in the next week.

Chair Chouinard reported there will be a fundraising event involving metal detection at Spring Hill Farm. This is a joint venture between the Historical Society and the SHFAC.

D. Wason Pond Conservation Area

Ms. Neff Ragsdale said there have been requests to use the fields and portables have been delivered. Some hazardous trees have been removed; however, there is still selective cutting that needs to be done, once permission is obtained. There will be a nature walk at Wason Pond on April 22nd. The Wason Wrangler is May 11th and volunteers are needed.

E. Easements, Monitoring, and Stewardship

Chair Chouinard reported that the Rockingham County Conservation District (RCCD) will be doing on-the-ground monitoring of Herrick Woods and the Natural Area (Gladys Nichols). He and Mr. Sibley walked and installed placards on the Penacook Conservation Easement area and he said the survey work looks good.

The Commission reviewed the recent monitoring of Mr. Myette's property. Mr. Tranquillo will create a schedule of properties that need to be monitored by the Commission and they discussed this.

F. Strategic Land Protection

Chair Chouinard provided an update on Parcel 8-16. He said the Superior Court agreed to let correspondence between attorneys and the parties happen via certified mail. They are waiting to hear from the attorney in South Carolina. He said it is a straightforward process and everyone has been properly compensated.

IV. Plan Reviews

None

V. Miscellaneous Business

Ms. Munson ordered 50 pollinator shrubs from the State Forest Nursery and offered them to members. The Commission discussed offering them to participants in the April 22nd nature walk.

VI. Non-Public Session: Strategic Land Protection

Chairman Chouinard asked for a motion to go into non-public session per RSA 91-A:3, II(d), Consideration of the acquisition, sale or lease of real or personal property which, if discussed in public, would likely benefit a party or parties whose interests are adverse to those of the general community; and (c) Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of this board, unless such person requests an open meeting. The motion was made and seconded. A vote was taken. The motion passed unanimously.

The cameras were turned off at 7:18 PM.
The meeting room was reopened.

A motion was made and seconded that the Commission come out of non-public session. A vote was taken. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. Return to Regular Meeting

A motion was made and seconded to seal the minutes for the non-public session indefinitely. A vote was taken. The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Adjourn

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. A vote was taken. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned.

227
228 Respectfully submitted,
229 Beth Hanggeli, Recording Secretary