

Town of South Thomaston, Maine
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Selectboard:
Jeff Northgraves
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Conservation Commission Minutes
Date: October 13, 2021, 5:00 PM
Place: Municipal Building

Conservation Commission Members Present: Catherine Bendheim, Linda Garat, Eileen Skarka, Leslie Spear, Henry Spencer, Sondra Wallace.

Others Present: None.

1. Vote to approve Minutes from August 11 and September 8 meetings. Prior to approval, Sondra Wallace stated that we should remind Terri Baines that we are the *Conservation Commission* not *Committee*. In addition, regarding Point V of the Minutes for August 11, she would like to have added to "...after the minutes are approved by the Conservation Commission a copy is sent to the Town Clerk to be archived at the Town Office *and posted on the Town website.*" Linda Garat will take care of the addendum.

The Minutes for the past two meetings were approved.

2. Self-introduction by Eileen Skarka, the new Commissioner. She described her education and experience, which has included a stint as Chair of the South Thomaston Planning Board. Eileen confirmed that she was officially sworn in as a STCC Commissioner.
3. Report on the possibility of the two small parcels of waterfront land on Chapel Street becoming available for conservation. This land was originally brought to our attention by Annette Naegel of the Georges River Land Trust. Sondra distributed a report on the meeting that she and Catherine Bendheim had on October 4 with Wayne Brown concerning these parcels of land, which are separated by a smaller parcel owned by Thomas Mackie. Mr. Brown wants the property, which is held in a trust, to be protected, with no buildings erected on it.

The reaction to the report included comments that the town does not have the money to buy the property, but it could be gifted to it or to the STCC. Other considerations include the cost of mowing, liability insurance, and the loss of tax revenue.

Henry Spencer said he would speak with Annette Naegel regarding proceeding and legal options for landowners in the state of Maine. Eileen suggested that we bring the entire subject to the attention of the Select Board for approval, and that for all future opportunities, we institute a process. It was agreed that Sondra will contact Mr. Brown to express our continuing interest, and this matter will be reincluded in next month's Agenda.

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4. Communication from John Fancy of the Town of Thomaston Pollution Control Department concerning water quality issues on the St. Georges River. Catherine noted that Mr. Fancy will be coming to speak with us in November, so this should remain as #4 on the Agenda.
5. Email discussion. Sondra made the point that each Commission member should use an email address that is not shared with a spouse or other family member, to ensure confidentiality and that the town is not sued. Vis-à-vis the draft Minutes for this meeting, Linda will send them to her email distribution list of the seven Commission members, as well as to: ConservationCommissionCommittee@souththomaston.me It was agreed that this item should remain on the Agenda for November.
6. Website discussion. Catherine cited our part of the Town of South Thomaston's website, located under "Boards and Committees," and the fact that currently it does not offer much data, is not very flexible, and all content must be approved. She asked what can we add? How can we format it – should we use subtabs? She referred to the website of the Georges River Land Trust as a model of organization and information, stating that eventually the STCC should consider creating our own website, which would be linked to that of the town.
7. Other Business. Catherine brought several maps which she will see if she can get laminated and perhaps mount on the walls of the municipal meeting room. She asked everyone to visit and study the following website: <https://www.maine.gov/ifw/fish-wildlife/wildlife/beginning-with-habitat/index.html>, which indicates how to be a conservation commission. Henry mentioned the Maine Clammers Association and its battle against the invasive European Green Crabs (for more information, see maineclammers.org), and Eileen put forward the National Library for the Environment as a source of data for grant money for land acquisition.

Leslie Spear reported that the 1.5-acre property for sale for \$135,000 on Island Road is now under contract, although if this transaction does not proceed, the property could be discussed again in the future.
8. Motion for Adjournment. It was moved and seconded that the meeting be adjourned. Motion passed 6-0.