

Conservation Commission Minutes  
Date: November 10, 2021, 5:00PM  
Place: Municipal Building

**Conservation Commission Members Present:** Catherine Bendheim, Theo Pratt, Leslie Spear, Henry Spencer, Sondra Wallace.

**Others Present:** John Fancy (Town of Thomaston Pollution Control Superintendent); Annette Naegel (Georges River Land Trust Director of Conservation); Wes Pratt (First Associate).

**Note:** In Linda Garat's absence, Sondra Wallace acted as Secretary for this meeting.

**Call to order:** Chair Theo Pratt called the meeting to order at 5:00PM.

**Adjustments to agenda:** All other agenda items were deferred until after John Fancy's presentation.

**Presentation by John Fancy on water sampling/testing initiative:**

The Thomaston Pollution Control Department conducts bacterial sampling of critical points in the Weskeag and St. George Rivers and tributaries. Since 2016 the Department has [included? conducted?] testing of samples taken in four locations in South Thomaston, under the Volunteer River Monitoring Program (VRMP) run by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Volunteers from several organizations, most recently the Weskeag River Monitoring Project (WRMP) have collected the water samples every other week during the months of June-September.

The Medomak and St. George Rivers are the most important clamming areas in Maine. Due to bacterial pollution, the St. George River's upper bay has been closed to commercial harvesting for several years; only depredation diggers based in Kittery are permitted to harvest there (because they have industrial-strength decontamination facilities). The goal is to reopen the St. George upper bay to local clamming within three years. Local towns and Conservation Commissions are anxious to stop depredation diggers, who dig ruthlessly and destructively. This area is an important seed area. Before the DEP and the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) will allow the beds to be opened, they must consistently meet water quality standards for several years.

Discussion/Action Item: Theo offered the Commission's help and noted the need to educate our citizens about the importance of this issue. The Commission does not wish to take over the testing, which is currently being performed by WRMP, but is willing to work in partnership with this group.

Henry Spencer will contact RSU 13, and our RSU 13 School Board representative, Brad Choyt, to explore the possibility of involving students in water quality monitoring work.

**Other Business:**

**Review of draft minutes of prior meetings:** Needed corrections were noted to the October 13 draft minutes. Sondra Wallace will circulate a revised draft to members, for review and approval at the December meeting.

**Chapel Street lots:** Sondra Wallace and Catherine Bendheim reported that there were no new developments. The Commissioners agreed that we need to inform the Select Board of the developments so far and obtain their approval before proceeding further. Sondra will draft a memo to the Select Board outlining the potential offer, the foreseeable costs (mowing and maintenance, insurance), and the benefits to the community.

**Joining the Maine Association of Conservation Commissions:** Theo reported that with the approval of the Select Board, she filed the paperwork to join this organization, together with the \$100 membership fee.

**Public Presentations on Conservation Issues:** There was a brief discussion of possible topics for educational presentations; this subject should be revisited at future meetings.

**Donations Received:** Theo reported that we received a \$100 donation from John and Leslie Spear, and a \$100 donation from the conservation working group that existed prior to the re-establishment of the Conservation Commission.

**Procedural Rules:** Henry has been looking into what procedural rules the STCC needs to follow or establish in conducting our business. He will contact our MMA counsel to learn if there are any rules already established to which we could or should adhere.

**Motion for Adjournment:** It was moved and seconded that the meeting be adjourned at 7:30PM. Motion passed 5-0.