



**Town of South Thomaston, Maine**  
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Jeff Northgraves  
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John Spear

Conservation Commission Minutes  
Date: February 9, 2022  
Zoom Meeting Hosted by Pennie Alley, Library Director

Conservation Commission Members Present: Catherine Bendheim, Linda Garat, Theo Pratt, Henry Spencer, Sondra Wallace

Others Present: Peter Mecklenburg, Sally Merchant

1. Call to order by Chair Theo Pratt at 5PM.
2. Adjustment to Agenda. Add to Old Business (as item 4E). Update on the budget process. Henry Spencer moved and Sondra Wallace seconded. Five voted in favor.
3. Review and Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes. Henry moved and Sondra seconded, to accept the Minutes from November 2021. There were four yeases and one abstention. Henry moved and Sondra seconded to accept the December Minutes, again with four yeases and one abstention. Regarding January 2022, Henry moved to accept the last amended version of the Minutes, with Catherine Bendheim seconding it. There were five yeases.
4. Old Business. A. Update regarding possible donation of land. Sondra reported that the opportunity to obtain the two Chapel Street lots by gift was presented to the Select Board on February 8. All three Board Members were enthusiastic about proceeding. They would like to receive an offer from Wayne Brown, with minimal conditions. Subsequently, the final decision would be made at the June Town Meeting whether to authorize the Select Board to accept the gift. Sondra will work with Catherine to prepare and send an email to Mr. Brown informing him of this development and asking him, if he is still interested, to make a written offer for this gift to the Town, indicating any conditions he would impose (e.g., no building on the property, land maintenance).
- B. Update on request for access to MMA Membership Services. Henry noted that as Conservation Commissioners we are all eligible for MMA membership services. The link to register is on the upper right-hand corner of the MMA website. The MMA will grant access after confirming our status as Town officers. Theo asked, and Henry agreed, to give a report at our next meeting on webinars we might attend. Catherine mentioned the cost of attendance - often \$35-50 - and Henry cited the education funds allocated in the proposed budget.

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C. Possible topics/speakers for programs for South Thomaston residents. Theo made a motion, which unanimously passed, to remove the word “monthly” from “C,” reflecting the Commissioners’ concern that monthly events, especially via Zoom, may at this time be overly ambitious. Opinions with respect to viable program frequency ranged from organizing a single event and seeing how it goes, to every other month. We could also research hikes offered by other conservation groups as a template.

D. Update on programs for schoolchildren. There was no movement forward on this subject. Roadside cleanup was brought up, and Theo stated that she believes the library hosts one. Pennie Alley is amenable to turning this event over to the STCC since it has not been a municipal program.

E. Update on the budget process. Theo sent the initial iteration of the budget to Town Administrator Terri Baines, whose feedback was that what we provided was adequate for now. Sondra, who is on the Budget Committee, said that our budget will be reviewed by the Select Board and the Budget Committee at a joint meeting. Since we are a newly resurrected entity and this is our first budget, they may have questions about it. We need to be prepared, and to choose a Commissioner as our representative to respond to questions. Henry offered to draft an explanation of the line items (and to be a representative - check with him). He will forward his draft to the Commissioners for discussion at the next meeting.

5. New Business. A. Upcoming Webinars on conservation issues. Theo suggested revisiting this topic next month. Catherine said that she signed up for a Knox County session on the benefits of landscaping from a conservation perspective and will report on it.

B. Review of existing trails in South Thomaston and creation of trail maps for the public. Postponed until next month.

C. Possible setup of Facebook page to increase visibility of Commission activities. Catherine stated that we need Facebook to communicate with the public and impart information. Theo encouraged everyone to visit the St. George Conservation Commission’s beautiful, comprehensive website - something to which we can aspire!

6. Adjourn. Henry moved to adjourn at 5:45PM, seconded by Linda Garat. Passed 5-0.