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**Selectboard:**  
Jeff Northgraves  
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John Spear

Conservation Commission Minutes  
Date: April 13, 2022  
Zoom Meeting Hosted by Pennie Alley

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

Others Present: Pennie Alley, Sally Merchant.

**I. Call to order by Chair Theo Pratt at 5:03PM.**

**II. Adjustments to Agenda. None.**

**III. Review and Approval of March 9 Meeting Minutes.** Theo made a motion to approve these Minutes, Henry Spencer seconded, and it passed 6-0. It was agreed that in future the Commissioners will contact the Secretary (Linda Garat) within one week after she emails them the draft Minutes, to inform her of any changes or corrections, or to state that they have none.

**IV. Old Business.** A. Update regarding possible donations of land (Sondra/Catherine). Since no new developments for several months at least are expected, Sondra Wallace suggested that we remove this item from Old Business. Sondra or Catherine will inform the Chair or Secretary when it should be put back on the agenda.

B. Possible topics/speakers for programs for South Thomaston residents. Theo's proposal of a roadside cleanup was well-received, and we chose a date of Saturday, May 21, although she will not be present on that day. We have the supplies, and Pennie Alley confirmed that we can headquarter the event at the Gilford Butler School. Henry floated the idea of a bar-b-q, and Leslie Spear has a truck that can be used to transport the trash.

Theo also volunteered to give a presentation – perhaps a “Program & Potluck” – on the Weskeag River. Catherine Bendheim will contact Carol Dumont of the Historical Society about using its space, potentially during the week of May 23-27 at 6PM. Sally Merchant said that she and her

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son Skip would like to hear Wes Pratt speak about the devices installed at their dock, and Theo replied that this information could possibly be incorporated into her talk.

C. Update on programs for schoolchildren (Henry). Henry stated that we must have a specific project in mind before the high school and its guidance counsellors can move forward with it. Leslie is a retired teacher and remarked that since the school year is now almost over, the timing is not right, but she will work on coming up with ideas for programs, including hands-on activities.

As an example of cross-generationally appropriate events, Theo lauded the Intertidal Science Tour she and Wes joined on April 9 at the Ash Point Preserve in Owls Head. It was sponsored by the Georges River Land Trust in partnership with the Herring Gut Learning Center. She will obtain contact information for Henry, who referenced as being of interest the aquaculture efforts of Dr. Ralph Hamill of the Weskeag Oyster farm and Krista Tripp of Aphrodite Oysters.

D. Update on proposed budget. Sondra reported that we requested \$750 and were allotted \$500. The difference is that the Select Board is opposed to the Commission having its own website. For future year's proposed budgets, she recommends that our submission include notes explaining or justifying items that are not self-explanatory, as needed.

E. Webinars on conservation issues. Theo already circulated a couple of webinars and hopes to come up with others next month. Henry suggested a public screening and discussion of a webinar at the GB School, and Catherine mentioned *The Story of Plastic*, an Earth Week movie and panel discussion she will attend at the Rockport Opera House on April 24, sponsored by the Rockport Conservation Commission and Maine Conservation Voters.

F. Possible setup of web page to increase visibility of Commission activities. Per Catherine, we are not ready for this objective. We need content and to determine the data that would be presented.

**V. New Business.** A. Review attendance requirements for Commissioners and discuss possible vacancies for the 2022-2023 term that will begin July 1. Theo noted that there are two Commissioners with a one-year term: Catherine and Linda. Sondra said that the Town's usual practice is to reappoint members with expiring terms, provided they are willing to continue to serve.

We have no official policy linking continued Commission membership to attendance at meetings, and Theo proposed that we consider developing one. Leslie observed that we do not have the power to vote people out. Henry will contact the Municipal Association to ascertain what other towns do.

Theo made the point that we should encourage as many persons as possible to join our efforts as Associate Members, one reason being that if a Commission vacancy occurs, we could readily present a replacement candidate to the Select Board. It would be opportune to have a list of

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Associate Members prepared by June. Sondra proposed, and it was agreed, that the Commission recommend to the Select Board that they appoint Sally Merchant as an Associate Member.

B. Schedule future activities and events. Just prior to tonight's meeting, Sondra sent an email with attachments containing initial drafts of documents relating to our mission, including (1) steps towards developing a long-range strategic plan; (2) a summary of the Commission's statutory and other authorities; (3) a preliminary list of conservation organizations; (4) a list of possible topics for conservation-related programs; and (5) a spreadsheet identifying South Thomaston residents who have participated in conservation-related groups or events. She stressed that these documents are drafts only, intended to invite discussion and modification. Henry stated that we need a chance to read all this data before the next meeting, and Sondra added that several of the topics and subtopics warrant working groups.

Our Annual Report is due to the Select Board by April 30, in time for inclusion in the Annual Town Report. Sondra will assume lead responsibility for writing this report, reaching out to other Commissioners for assistance as appropriate.

C. Plan for outreach to community. This subject will remain on the agenda.

D. Report on the Bobolink Trail on Route 131. Wes Pratt was not present, so Theo briefly described a recent hike on this trail, which is beautifully maintained by the GRLT. We could develop a catalog of trails that the public can enjoy, including undeveloped land that may be privately owned.

E. Possible use of Community Room at the Gilford Butler School for meetings/events. Theo raised the possibility of moving our monthly meeting to the GBS. However, the majority felt that as part of the Town government, we should continue to meet at the Town Office. Catherine commented that we should still offer a Zoom component in case someone cannot physically get to a meeting. Pennie typically hosts the Zooms and is willing to keep on with it. The option remains of holding other Commission-sponsored events at GBS, when feasible and appropriate. Wi-Fi is not yet available there, which could be a limiting factor.

F. Discuss possible sources of funding if Budget request is insufficient. Currently funds are not needed, so we do not have to focus on this. Theo brought up the Touch of Glass redemption opportunity, and if fundraising becomes an issue, we can cite the monies generated via recycling.

## **VI. Items for Next Agenda.**

**VII. Adjourn.** A motion to adjourn was made by Henry at 6:19PM, seconded by Sondra. The motion passed 6-0.