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**Selectboard:**  
Jeff Northgraves  
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John Spear

**Conservation Commission Minutes, June 8, 2022**  
**In-Person Meeting at South Thomaston Town Office, with Zoom Video Conferencing**

Commissioners Present: Linda Garat, Catherine Lerne, Theo Pratt, Leslie Spear, Henry Spencer, Sondra Wallace.

Others Present: Sally Merchant (by Zoom), Ellen Jorgensen

**I. Call to Order** by Henry Spencer at 5:00PM.

**II. Adjustments to Agenda.** Ellen Jorgensen, representing Our Power, was invited by Catherine Lerne to speak. Our Power's vision is to create a consumer-owned utility not financed by taxpayer money. It would offer an alternative to CMP, which is owned by investors from out-of-the country, spends little on our grid, and is lowly ranked in terms of service, maintenance, etc. Ellen cited the fact that 28% of Americans get their power from consumer-owned utilities.

**III. Review and Approval of May 11, 2022, Meeting Minutes.** Unanimously approved.

**IV. Old Business.**

**A. Report on the May 21<sup>st</sup> roadside/coastal cleanup and second cleanup in September.** Henry will create a planning checklist for other cleanups and advised that we should start working on an Earth Day 2023 event in February. Leslie Spear reported that on May 21<sup>st</sup> she took several trips to the transfer station with her truck laden with garbage and that in future, we should inform them of upcoming events. Theo Pratt indicated that we earned \$8.50 from can recycling at the Touch of Glass Redemption Center. A date for the cleanup in September was not established, and the tides should be taken into consideration.

**B. Report on the May 26<sup>th</sup> program about the Weskeag River.** Theo estimated that there were 25 attendees. The presentation was very well-received, and she would like to plan another one in the Fall.

**C. Update on possible vacancies for the 2022-2023 term which will begin on July 1<sup>st</sup>.** Catherine and Linda Garat again confirmed that they wish to continue as Commissioners, and Theo said that, due to Eileen Skarka's resignation, we need one more Commissioner. After the Annual Town

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Meeting the Select Board will choose one person from those individuals who have submitted their names as being interested in furthering our efforts.

**D. Report on responses to sign-up sheets and survey.** The feedback was derived from a very small sample. Sondra reported that the geology of South Thomaston and Weskeag River, along with invasive versus native plants, garnered the most interest. Catherine and Henry were enthusiastic about the latter subject since the weather is now suitable for gardening. It was agreed that a good source of recommendations for speakers is MOFGA, as well as the Knox-Lincoln Soil & Water Conservation District regarding their specific programs, both of which Sondra could contact.

**E. Explore the possibility of the Commission having a dedicated distribution list.** No developments.

**F. Report on sources of funding.** As indicated in item IV (A), the May 21<sup>st</sup> cleanup yielded \$8.50 from recycling.

**G. Report on Stream Smart Workshop.** Henry did not attend the workshop, which was primarily about culverts, aquatic wildlife transfer from one place to another, and siltation.

## **V. New Business.**

**A. Possible material to be distributed at the Annual Town Meeting.** Theo made a motion, which Henry seconded and was unanimously approved, to allow her as Chair to ask for the Select Board's permission to have our survey and sign-up sheets at the meeting, ideally on a table with one of us positioned there. She added that another benefit of having individuals sign up at the meeting is that going forward they would be covered should anything unforeseen happen at an event, because technically it would not be their first time volunteering.

**B. Discuss Tax Acquired Land.** Following the request of the Select Board for the STCC's opinion on a 5-acre parcel of land located off Westbrook Street, Sondra drove to see it. It is a beautiful but irregularly shaped tract of land, suitable for wildlife, with road frontage that is very wet and substantial elevation changes that probably render it unsuitable for trail development. Sondra made a motion, which Catherine seconded and was unanimously approved, for Theo to verbally communicate to the Select Board that it is our opinion that this land should simply be retained by the town as an open space.

**C. Strategic Planning.** At our previous meeting Sondra quickly summarized her initial drafts of documents related to our mission. Questions abound as to how the STCC will achieve the goals entailed, and if we should establish a working group and approach other commissions, such as the one in the Town of St. George? Catherine stated that we should make use of her maps, and Theo also has maps that Andrew Stancioff gave her at the Weskeag presentation.

**D. Developing a mission statement.** Sondra felt that we are not quite ready to create one, and Leslie commented that it's an endeavor which could be discussed for an entire meeting.

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Catherine volunteered to gather in one document the mission statements of the five surrounding towns, so we can use them as an inspiration for crafting on our own statement.

**E. Interfacing with other conservation associations.** As above.

**VI. Items for next Agenda.** Henry suggested that the three officer positions (Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary) on the STCC as of July 1<sup>st</sup> be determined by ranked choice voting, with everyone's name listed for all three offices, unless a Commissioner notifies Theo by the end of June that they do not want to be considered to serve. Theo will create a ballot.

Leslie brought up organizing a public walk on the Stump Dump Trail, and this topic will be included under New Business at the next meeting.

**VII. Adjourn.** A motion to adjourn was made by Henry at 6:10PM, seconded by Theo. The motion passed.