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Conservation Commission Minutes, August 10, 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 by Zoom: Sally Merchant, Associate Member

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

II. Adjustments to Agenda. Catherine Lerne added a New Business item concerning a possible conservation easement (see V.C.).

III. Review and Approval of July 13, 2022, Meeting Minutes. Unanimously approved.

IV. Old Business.

A. Update plans for possible September 10 public walk on the Stump Dump Trail. Leslie volunteered to make a poster that will include a statement such as: "the South Thomaston Conservation Commission invites you to take a guided walk on the back access road to the Stump Dump Trail." Sondra Wallace emphasized the importance of communicating the duration of the walk, the type of terrain, and providing a contact name and number, should potential participants have questions. We can affix the poster to the bulletin boards at the library and the Post Office, as well as publicize the event via the town's email distribution list, the Free Press, and the Knox County Village Soup. The rain date is September 11.

B. Update plans for September or October roadside/shoreline cleanup. Our focus will be on a Town Public Landing & Buttermilk Lane Cleanup, starting at 9AM on October 15, with the possibility of a barbeque at the end. The Commissioners should remember to count the number of trash bags taken to the transfer station. In addition, we might show interested individuals the marsh overlook. Theo recalled that some time ago Keel Kemper of the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife gave a great talk there on birds. She added that the path could use some maintenance, particularly the boards.

C. Consideration of draft mission statement. Henry made a motion to approve the statement, as included in the Minutes for the July 13 meeting. The motion was seconded by Catherine, then unanimously approved. Henry will send it to the Town Office and ask if there are questions or feedback. If not, we will have it posted on the STCC page on the Town website.

D. Report on July 14 presentation to the Select Board on June 17 Maine Climate Conference. Theo attended the statewide program in Augusta and subsequently encouraged the Select Board to sanction South Thomaston's participation in the *Community Resilience Partnership*. Meg Rasmussen, who is our facilitator, then spoke with the Select Board, and they gave permission to proceed, which could result in \$50,000 in grants to reduce emissions and counter the effects of climate change. Meg also assists Owls Head, and our two towns can work together to achieve results.

This project will entail grant writing, establishing a working group of motivated town residents who complete the *Community Resilience Self-Evaluation* form (on which Theo said "there are no wrong answers"), and scheduling a public information meeting to evaluate which aspects of the partnership will be pursued. Sondra and Catherine remarked that we should narrow our consideration of the many actionable strategy areas to develop a clear goal.

It was decided that this discussion will be carried over to the next meeting, with a budgeted time of approximately 20 minutes for the conversation. In the meantime, Theo will resend to the Commissioners a three-page document of pertinent information.

E. Sign-up sheets at Annual Town Meeting: report on proposal to the Select Board. Sondra told John Spear that our results at the meeting were minimal, and he said that the Select Board is considering doing something different next year. Henry reiterated that the STCC should be given the opportunity to briefly speak and promote our efforts and seek the public's involvement. Catherine again cited Voting Day as an avenue for kindling interest. This item will be removed from Old Business for a few months.

F. Update on disposition of maps donated by Andrew Stancioff and Sandy Retzlaff; where to keep files, maps, etc. There are two sets of maps, and Henry plans to cut out towns other than South Thomaston from one set to save money on lamination, then mount them at the Town Office. He will ask Terri Baines about storing the other maps.

G. Collection of aluminum cans since the last meeting (please bring them). An ongoing effort.

H. Update on plans for educational program: native vs. invasive plants. Sondra confirmed that it is set for October 26 at the Library, with either Rebecca Jacobs (Program Manager) or Louisa Crane (Program Coordinator) of the Knox-Lincoln Soil & Water Conservation District, presenting. At the next meeting, establishing a start time and publicizing the event should be discussed.

V. New Business.

A. Possible creation of recreation committee: STCC role? Coordination with Library/Community Center Committee? The consensus was that if the town moves forward with a Recreation Committee, maintaining the tennis courts or arranging kayak trips, to cite a couple of examples, is not part of our mission. According to Terri Baines, a working group is being formed, but those involved are not waiting for the STCC to commit (or not).

B. Discuss development of standard procedures for informing the public of STCC goals, activities, and upcoming events. Linda will create a list of resources to use to generate publicity for STCC efforts.

C. Possible conservation easement on parcel of Smith land. Catherine said that she had a conversation with Jeff Smith of Owls Head, who is interested in putting 100 acres of land he owns in South Thomaston under some form of conservation protection. The parcel is adjacent to the Stump Dump Trail. It was agreed that Catherine, Linda Garat, and Leslie Spear will meet at the Town Office parking lot at 10AM on Friday, August 26, and take a walk with Mr. Smith.

VI. Items for next Agenda. As noted above.

VII. Adjourn. A motion to adjourn was made by Henry at 6:16PM, seconded by Catherine. The motion passed.