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Jeff Northgraves  
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John Spear

Conservation Commission Minutes, September 14, 2022  
In-Person Meeting at the Town Office, with Zoom Video Conferencing

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

No Participation by Zoom.

**I. Call to Order.** In the absence of Henry Spencer, Chair, Sondra Wallace, Vice-Chair, presided and called the meeting to order at 5:08PM.

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

**III. Review and Approval of August 10, 2022, Meeting Minutes.** Unanimously approved.

**IV. Old Business.**

**A. Update plans for October 15 Town Landing/Buttermilk Lane cleanup.** Sondra stated that Henry would like to purchase plastic signs which can be reused for other events, and that he suggested buying ten signs (assuming we can get a good quantity discount). Henry offered to check out local sign shops Theo Pratt said there is a very good sign shop near Lowe's and will investigate this further. It was agreed that Henry and Leslie Spear will form a cleanup working group, and that she will cart the gathered trash away with her truck.

**B. Update plans for October 26 educational program: native vs. invasive plants.** The program will start at 6PM at the Gilford Butler Building. Sondra will contact the Knox-Lincoln Soil & Water Conservation District regarding publicity materials and request permission to offer the program as a Zoom as well as to record it, thus initiating an archive of presentations. Catherine brought up technical aspects and ensuring that we have the vital pieces of equipment for a glitch-free delivery. Sondra will check with Knox-Lincoln and Pennie Alley to ascertain that everything needed is in place. Leslie will make a poster, which Catherine will scan and save as a PDF for distribution (for distribution sites, see Item IV.F.)

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**C. Report on September 10 public walk on the Stump Dump Trail.** This did not take place, due in part to the fact that much of the trail is so overgrown that walking is difficult. Catherine mentioned that four-wheelers have created ruts, bumps, and potholes.

**D. Report on August 26 walk/meeting with Jeff Smith concerning possible conservation status for his 100 acres.** The Commissioners discussed the definition and legal implications of calling a tract a “town forest.” Leslie will ask John Spear as to how South Thomaston defines this term, and for additional clarification she and Theo Pratt will pay a visit to John Fancy in Thomaston, which has a town forest.

Catherine will call Jeff Smith to follow-up. His main concern appears to be that if he donates this land (or sells it at a discount) to the Town, no portion of it should ever be sold or developed. Although putting land into a conservation status generally reduces tax revenue, this could be offset by the anticipated tax revenues, cost savings, and other financial incentives to be gained by South Thomaston from the proposed solar farm project. Theo remarked that the STCC should develop guidance for landowners considering conservation donations, such as a checklist of issues to consider, and Catherine added that the Georges River Land Trust might have a template for this.

**E. Discuss possible South Thomaston participation in Maine Community Resilience Partnership.** The word “possible” should be deleted because we are most certainly pursuing this opportunity! Theo is developing a working group of 7-8 town residents, which currently includes herself, Leslie, Pennie, Maureen Spencer, and Kathy Florance of the Historical Society. She said it would be ideal to have a group member from the fishing community or perhaps the Lions Club. The names of Arthur Alley, Pennie’s husband and a fisherman, and Rolf Winters were mentioned. Sondra suggested that Betty Thomas, the Town’s Emergency Management Director, also be considered.

The group’s first task will be to introduce the concept of the Community Resilience Partnership to the town citizens. Theo emphasized that we must determine what our community really wants or what is of greatest concern. It was also proposed that one of the Commissioners undertake the responsibility of monitoring and exploring existing and forthcoming grants for conservation.

**F. Discuss resources/procedures for STCC notices to the public.** We discussed two aspects of this task: the form and contents of notices, and where to post them. Sondra said that we should develop a library of notices already released by the STCC, thus using our time most efficiently and effectively in the future.

As to where to post them, Linda Garat had made a list including the Town listserv, and bulletin boards at the Town Office, Library, Post Office, Historical Society, and Keag Store. Sondra suggested posting at the Spruce Head Post Office and Community Center, and (depending on the event), mailing the posters to the Owls Head and St. George Conservation Commissions to possibly include on their websites and distribute to their respective listserv. In addition, it was suggested that we place tent signs (which would have to be purchased) at the intersections of Buttermilk & Route 73 and Route 1 & Route 131, provided it is legal and permitted.

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**G. Discuss updates to the STCC web page (mission statement, etc.).** Our page on the Town website is not up to date and does not include our Mission Statement (which Henry agreed to send to the Select Board for questions or feedback). Sondra, Catherine, and Linda will form a working group to identify needed updates and corrections, to be presented as a package to Terri Baines, to minimize the demands on her time. A longer-range plan could be to find a well-trained volunteer who could input data periodically, without needing to involve Terri. However, she and/or the Select Board might have concerns.

**H. Update on disposition of maps donated by Andrew Stancioff and Sandy Retzlaff.** At the recently held Library yard sale Theo sold, for \$20 each, two maps given to her by Andrew Stancioff. (These were maps given to members of the previous *ad hoc* conservation group, not maps Andrew donated to the STCC). The \$40 profit was turned over to the Town for the benefit of the STCC. At succeeding Library yard sales, it might prove beneficial to have a table with our literature prominently displayed and Commissioners on hand to answer any questions and describe our efforts.

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

**V. New Business.** None.

**VI. Items for next Agenda.** None.

**VII. Adjourn.** A motion to adjourn was made by Catherine at 6:20PM, seconded by Linda. The motion passed.