



**Town of South Thomaston, Maine**  
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Conservation Commission Minutes, December 14, 2022  
In-Person Meeting at the Town Office, with Zoom Video Conferencing

Commissioners Present: Neil Cambridge, Linda Garat, Catherine Lerme, Leslie Spear, Henry Spencer, Sondra Wallace.

Commissioners not in attendance: Theo Pratt

Associate Members present: Sally Merchant  
No participants via Zoom

**I. Call to Order.** Henry Spencer, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:10PM.

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

**III. Review and Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes (November 9, 2022).** Henry made a motion to approve, which was seconded by Neil Cambridge, then unanimously approved.

**IV. Old Business.**

A. Report on November 16 educational program: Invasive vs. Native Plants. Sondra reported that more than thirty persons attended the talk by Louisa Crane. It was informative and very well-received. If feasible, Pennie Alley will put it on the town's YouTube. Catherine Lerme suggested that we compile a binder of information related to the presentation for reference at the Library. It could have a cover indicating that it has been "graciously provided by the STCC and the Knox-Lincoln Soil & Water Conservation District," and include a table of contents. Linda Garat agreed to work on this when she gets the descriptive materials from Catherine.

B. Update on Community Resilience Partnership. Neil spoke on behalf of Theo Pratt, who was not at the meeting. He stated that the group is still processing what it wants to accomplish and how to do so. An information event held at the Library during the December 10 Coffee Hour was successful: the survey of town resident concerns was completed by over 20 people, and it

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enabled partnership members to “get outside the group.” The next meeting will be held in early February.

C. Update on land conservation: November 14 meeting with Annette Naegel. On December 13 Catherine submitted a report to the STCC on the meeting that she, Sally Merchant, and Sondra Wallace had with Annette Naegel, who was very helpful. She recommended that initially we do the required open space inventory. Open spaces are organized into four categories: state and federal ownership, town ownership, Land Trust or other conservation nonprofit ownership, and private land classified under Open Space, per application by the landowner and Select Board approval.

While it’s essential to conduct an inventory of open spaces in South Thomaston, questions abound: how do we determine which town properties are designated as “open spaces?” How much of this space exists? Is enough of it connectible? Could the STCC gain access to town records pertaining to open spaces, although this data may involve private tax information? South Thomaston does not have a resident town assessor, so the Select Board functions in this capacity. It was suggested that Leslie Spear ask her husband, John, these questions. Catherine and Neil agreed to form a working group to begin the inventory.

D. Update on resources/procedures for STCC notices to the public. Sondra has completed a guidance document on how and where to publicize an event. It will continue to be revised, as needed.

E. Discussion concerning Mission Statement: response to November 15 Select Board comments. On December 7 Sondra emailed the Commissioners summarizing the events to date regarding the Mission Statement, notably Select Board concerns that the statement should be more comprehensive than what was originally proposed. Some Commissioners agreed; others felt it should be concise, with the general consensus being that the statement is not a top priority, and we should all reread the materials and discuss the topic again next month.

F. Progress report on updates to the town website and STCC webpage. We appreciate that Terri Baines incorporated changes Sondra requested on behalf of the STCC via email on December 12. The remaining goal, to improve *the entire website*, is beyond the scope of the STCC alone. This subject will be removed from the next Agenda since everything the public needs to know about the STCC is available on our webpage.

G. Update on procurement of signs for clean-up days. Henry reported that one-color, two-sided signs cost \$15 each when purchasing a quantity of 20.

H. Update on disposition of maps donated by Andrew Stancioff and Sandy Retzlaff. Henry said we should use a Masonite back frame, with the legend dry-mounted on the back, rather than foam core backing for the maps. It’s a good way to preserve them and pass them around. A 20-inch square costs \$20, with six maps totaling \$120. He would like to proceed with an order. A motion was made by Sondra to approve the expenditure, seconded by Leslie, then unanimously approved.

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I. January 31, 2023, talk on brown-tail moths and hemlock woolly adelgids (at the St. George Town Hall, Tenants Harbor, co-sponsored with the St. George Conservation Commission). Ken Oelberger, Chair of the St. George CC, attended our Invasive Plant presentation, and said to Sondra that he encourages joint efforts. Sondra and Linda are currently working on publicity for the January talk by Rebecca Jacobs of the Knox-Lincoln Soil & Water Conservation District. We can mount posters, ask Terri to inform town residents about the event via the email distribution list, contact the local papers, and liaise with the Owls Head Conservation Commission.

J. Collection of aluminum cans (please bring them).

#### **V. New Business.**

A. Opportunities for collaboration with other conservation commissions. Henry suggested that we move this subject to Old Business at the next meeting, on January 11, and asked the Commissioners to think about topics that would be of interest to other commissions, in addition to co-sponsoring events.

B. Renewal of membership in the MEACC. Sondra spoke with MEACC (Maine Association of Conservation Commissions) Executive Director Fred Snow. He clarified that the annual membership fee is due in August. The Town Office has paid the fee (it's only \$100, because South Thomaston's population is under 2,000).

C. STCC budget for the 2023-2024 fiscal year. Terri needs our budget by mid-February, so we can work on it during our meetings in January and February. The Budget Committee meets during the second week in April. Sondra said we can't justify a budget of \$500 – our expenditures this year were only \$100 for the MEACC and the email address charge (which we might not have to pay). The rest goes back to reserves. Catherine said she would like us to purchase a large rain barrel to water the town office garden.

**VI. Items for next Agenda.** As indicated above.

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