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Conservation Commission Minutes, January 11, 2023
In-Person Meeting at the Town Office, with Zoom Video Conferencing

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

Commissioners not in attendance: Theo Pratt, Leslie Spear

Associate Member present: Sally Merchant
No participants via Zoom

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

II. Adjustments to Agenda. None.

III. Review and Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes: December 14, 2022. To ensure we always have a quorum, Sondra Wallace requested that the Commissioners give notice in advance of meetings if they are unable to attend, and also that non-attendance be noted in the Minutes. [A reminder: our By-Laws provide that Members unable to attend a meeting shall notify the Secretary]. Neil Cambridge then made a motion to approve the Minutes, seconded by Henry, and they were unanimously approved.

IV. Old Business.

A. STCC budget for 2023-2024 fiscal year. The current budget ends in June. We had asked for \$815 for FY 2022-2023, which turned out to be too much. Sondra confirmed that we need \$100 for dues to the MEACC (Maine Association of Conservation Commissions), and possible funding for training and travel. Regarding paper, ink, toner, or copying, she suggests we go to Staples and submit receipts to the town for reimbursement. No money is required for space rental or speaker fees, and probably little or none for roadside cleaning supplies. Terri Baines, Town Administrator, determines the amount for insurance. This year's budget must be submitted by mid to late February. At the next STCC meeting we will finalize the amount requested.

Catherine Lerme brought up the subject of purchasing a rain barrel, for approximately \$75, to be placed at the town office garden. It would be a concrete example of good conservation practices. Sondra said that rather than budget for this item, we could describe its merits to the town and perhaps it could buy it.

On a larger scale, Catherine referred to the 100-acre parcel, the need to find the title for it, and assess its boundaries and condition, perhaps via surveying - although this might cost in the neighborhood of \$12K. Sally Merchant added that speaking with the abutters of the parcel is a good place to start, and that there might be a lawyer willing to donate title search services. It was agreed that we will continue the conversation, if informally, on this subject.

B. Update on the Community Resilience Partnership. Neil distributed a timeline draft and citizen responses to the survey the Partnership conducted in December. He reported that the Self-Evaluation is essentially complete and ready to be submitted to the Select Board. With regard to greenhouse gas emissions, Neil met with Meg Rasmussen for orientation, and volunteered to collect data.

Another informational event, similar to the one in December, is scheduled on January 21 at the Gilford Butler Center, to gather even more input, after which the Community Actions checklist can be distilled to probably three issues. A Public Meeting at the Methodist Church will be held on February 4.

C. Update on land conservation and open space. Catherine has been working on our statutory responsibility to index all publicly and privately owned open areas in the Town. With help from Leslie Spear and Terri Baines, she has obtained information from the Town records on properties in South Thomaston – totaling 1,812 acres – that are tax-advantaged or protected, as follows:

Farmland – 443 acres; tree growth – 398; State of Maine – 375; Georges River Land Trust – 317; Maine Coast Heritage Trust – 133; town of South Thomaston – 127 (includes the 100-acre parcel); open space – 17; working waterfront – 2.

Catherine has a map that has property lines on it. She would like it to be copied and mounted on a board, to provide perspective especially vis-à-vis potential land donation and conservation. The data can also be manipulated on a spreadsheet that she has created. Catherine said she would obtain tracing paper to create overlays showing the various categories of Open Spaces.

D. Update on planning for the January 31 talk on brown-tail moth (BTM) and hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA), co-sponsored with the St. George Conservation Commission, to be held at the St. George Town Office, Tenants Harbor, 6:30PM. Sondra said that the planning is complete. Re: publicity, John Knuerr will inform the print media tomorrow and take care of posters in his immediate area, Sondra will ask Terri to post details on our town's listserv, and she and Linda Garat will put up flyers next week.

E. Discussion concerning revisions to the Mission Statement: response to November 15 Select Board comments. It was agreed that for the time being this subject will be removed from the agenda.

F. Update on procurement of signs for clean-up days. Henry plans to bring to the next meeting a mockup of two signs: a safety sign to give to volunteers indicating that a roadside cleanup is in progress, and an announcement of our event, with the date left blank so it can be reused. We can discuss the specific wording at our February meeting. By that meeting he will also obtain a firm price for at least 12 of the safety signs, and 4-6 of the announcement signs, and expects that the cost will be \$12-\$14 each.

G. Follow-up concerning outreach to/collaboration with other Conservation Commissions. Sondra will take on this responsibility. She suggested we find a time to get together with other CCs at a joint meeting in the spring, and consider what ground we might like to cover. Meantime, Sondra will try to reach out to Owls Head, St. George, Rockland (if she can find their CC), as well as Thomaston, which she found out from John Knuerr is apparently active again.

Catherine mentioned that she would like to invite John Fancy to speak about solar.

H. Update on disposition of maps donated by Andrew Stancioff and Sandy Retzlaff. Henry will take the maps to be dry-mounted on Masonite board next week. The expenditure was approved at the meeting in December.

I. Follow-up to November 2022 talk on invasive vs. native plants. Catherine gave Linda a set of information sheets on specific plants, to be made available to residents through the Library.

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

V. New Business. None.

VI. Items for next Agenda. As indicated above.

VII. Adjourn. A motion to adjourn was made by Catherine at 5:40PM, seconded by Henry. The motion passed.