Conservation Commission Minutes, February 8, 2023

In-Person Meeting at the Town Office, with Zoom Video Conferencing

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

Commissioners not in attendance: Neil Cambridge

Associate Member present: Sally Merchant

Other Attendance via Zoom: Nancy Gosselin

**I.**  **Call to Order**. Henry Spencer, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:07PM.

**II. Adjustments to Agenda.** Henry added a New Business item on Earth Day roadside clean-up planning.Catherine Lerme added a New Business item regarding a *Land for Maine’s Future* (LMF) call for proposals. Theo Pratt added a New Business item concerning fundraising.Linda Garat added an Old Business item following up on the *Invasive vs. Native Plants* program in November.

**III. Review and Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes: January 11, 2023.** Henry made a motion to approve, which was seconded by Catherine, then unanimously approved.

**IV.** **Old Business**.

A. Finalize STCC budget request for 2023-2024 fiscal year. After discussion, Theo made a motion, seconded by Linda, that we should request $500. The Commissioners voted yes, with the exception of Sondra Wallace. Henry agreed to explain the following projected expenditures to the Select Board:

$150 Presenter’s costs (paying for gas, gift card for presenting, etc.)

$100 MEACC annual dues (Maine Association of Conservation Commissions)

$100 Supplies (Earth Day cleanup, etc.)

$100 Photocopying (e.g., the map Catherine brought to the meeting cost $42)

$ 50 Miscellaneous

B. Update on the Community Resilience Partnership, including January 21 and February 4 events.Sally Merchant and Nancy Gosselin provided an update. The voting to determine which of three options is most popular among South Thomaston residents should be completed by February 10, followed by a presentation to the Select Board for its approval, then a formal application for the grant. To date, the option receiving the most votes is to “install a renewable energy project (such as solar) on municipal property (rooftop or land) to reduce energy costs.”

C. Update on open space index/land conservation. Catherine brought a 2-foot-wide map of South Thomaston (she had the original copied at Staples), with highlighting of the borders of the plots of protected land. It’s a useful visual tool to mark up as more land comes under protection. Catherine intends to crosshatch and continue to color-code the map, ultimately backing it on a board and hanging it on the wall of the Town Office meeting space.

D. Report on the January 31 talk on brown-tail moth (BTM) and hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA), co-sponsored with the St. George Conservation Commission. Sondra reported that we had a good turnout, which Henry quantified as 12-15 attendees, and 35 persons on Zoom. The St. George CC will make the covered material available online, then we should arrange for it to be uploaded to our town’s website. Linda Garat will make a folder of PDF files of the handouts.

E. Follow-up concerning outreach to/collaboration with other Conservation Commissions. Sondra emailed neighboring commissions and heard back from each one, with the exception of Owls Head. Most of the replies were that “they were strongly in favor of a conference, and would get back to us with names of designees for a working group to plan the event.” Sondra suggested that we might also reach out to all of the local land trusts and other related groups, so we can get to know each other. Sally agreed to work with Sondra on planning for the conference.

F. Update on procurement of signs for clean-up days. Henry will order 24 safety signs and 4-6 clean-up announcement signs, the latter of which should include “please meet at the Gilford Butler Center parking lot.”

G. Update on disposition of maps donated by Andrew Stancioff and Sandy Retzlaff. Henry has an appointment with the framer regarding these maps, and confirmed that she now has the time to work on them. Once he gets the price for the job, he will email it to the Commissioners.

H. Collection of aluminum cans (please bring them). It was agreed that this item will be removed from subsequent agendas.

I. Follow-up from program on Invasive vs. Native Plants. Linda Garat brought a binder comprised of species information from the November 2022 program. She will deliver this binder to the Library, and sent Pennie Alley a file of PDFs of each of the plants covered by the talk.

**V. New Business**.

A. Discuss/outline annual report due end of February. The report covers fiscal year July 2022-June 2023. It will list STCC accomplishments through February (educational programs, clean-up events, the work started on the open space indexing and mapping, and contact made to other conservation commissions regarding a conference), *as well as* *what we plan to accomplish in the remainder of the fiscal year* (similar efforts as in July-February, plus a Knox County Conservation Commissions conference, and possible participation in an event that the MEACC hosts). Henry will craft a draft report and send it to the Commissioners. Sondra alerted Theo that the February deadline will apply to any item the Community Resilience Partnership Work Group wants to submit for the report. Theo will contact Terri Baines about this.

B. Planning for Earth Day clean-up. This year Earth Day is on Saturday, April 22. Our clean-up will be held that day, with a rain date the following Saturday. Henry again volunteered to provide and prepare the food, and Leslie Spear mentioned that we should promote the fact that this is a clean-up AND a bbq. Henry will compose a press release for the event by the end of the week and send it to the Commissioners for comment.

C. Fundraising proposals. Theo’s idea for non-budgetary fund raising is to sell our maps at a table at the Earth Day clean-up, and at yard sales held at the Gilford Butler Center. If the maps cost $5 to duplicate, we could sell them for $10. We could also consider selling household items that we are not using. It was agreed that this is a great idea, and will be included on next month’s agenda. In the meantime, Theo will ask Terri Baines how much non-budgetary funds we currently have, and perhaps this money could be used to buy the rain barrel Catherine suggested for the Town Office garden during the last meeting.

D. *Land for Maine’s Future* (LMF) call for proposals. Catherine had forwarded to the Commissioners a call from the LMF Board for proposals for conservation of working forests. She proposed that we review the announcement and consider if there might be a role for the STCC in informing eligible and interested South Thomaston landowners of the announcement and helping them to apply to the program.

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

**VII.** **Adjourn**. A motion to adjourn was made by Henry at 7:18PM, seconded by Catherine. The motion passed.