



Town of South Thomaston, Maine
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Conservation Commission Meeting, November 8, 2023
In-Person Meeting at the Town Office, with Zoom Video Conferencing

STCC Commissioners present: Linda Garat, Catherine Lerme, Leslie Spear, Sondra Wallace

STCC Commissioner not present: Henry Spencer

Associate Member present: Sally Merchant

Other attendees: Annette Naegel (Georges River Land Trust [GRLT]), John Spear (Select Board)

I. Call to Order. Sondra Wallace, STCC Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:03PM.

II. Adjustments to Agenda. Added a New Business item concerning a FEMA event.

III. Review and Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes (October 11, 2023). Unanimously approved.

IV. Old Business.

A. Proposed forest preserve: discussion with Annette Naegel (GRLT). Annette distributed: *What is a Conservation Easement with the Georges River Land Trust? Steps to Conveying a Donated Conservation Easement*, and *Conservation Easement on Plaisted Conservation Land (Owls Head)*. She agreed to send additional documents, including a spreadsheet template for tracking the expenses of a land preservation project.

A conservation easement is a restriction on top of a deed. It describes uses that can occur on property. A legal agreement between South Thomaston and the GRLT would include the latter checking the title, making sure the boundaries of the property are clear, advising, monitoring, defending and enforcing the easement values in perpetuity. GRLT would be the holders of the easement, while the town retains ownership of the property. The estimated one-time fee is \$10,000, which can be included in a grant.

The STCC and the town have to ascertain our intentions vis-à-vis the Cline property. Catherine Lerme asked if Annette could recommend a forester. This would be in addition to Maren Granstrom, formerly with Mid-Maine Forestry, to obtain a second opinion re: mapping the land, selective harvesting, getting rid of invasives, etc. Annette has a list of foresters and surveyors she can give us, and she remarked that the state forester for our region might also be able to provide some recommendations for consulting foresters. She added that the management plan for a forest is usually predicted on a 10-year cycle. Regarding trail layout, Annette said we could do it ourselves: engage persons in the community who love to do this, find interesting topographical features, avoid wet, mossy areas.

John Spear noted that South Thomaston is dealing with 5-6 parcels that will become one. Three of these parcels belonged to Jeff Smith, and the town needs to raise money to complete the preliminary survey of the Smith property. Annette emphasized that it is vital to get a survey of *the entire acreage* to ascertain exactly what we own. GRLT will not put an easement on the land without knowing its boundaries.

Catherine brought up the subject of donations, the donation cycle, and who writes the grant applications. Annette stated that GRLT, as a 501.c.(3), can act as the physical sponsor and conduit for donors who must give to charitable organizations. They can donate to the GRLT, which would then forward the money to the town to be used for the designated conservation-related project. GRLT charges 8% of the donation as overhead to complete the intermediation. Our contact would be Julia Sampson, the Director of Operations. Annette went on to say that many foundations are enthusiastic about communities and municipalities applying for grants and donations, with private foundations possibly being a quicker and easier source of funding than public entities, which use publicly-collected money to support their initiatives.

B. Report on October 14 roadside cleanup day and community lawn sale day. Leslie Spear reported that the cleanup was not very successful because it was held alongside the community lawn sale. She thinks it would be better in the future to plan a cleanup day as a stand-alone event.

C. Report on Select Board action: resignation of Commissioner. Sondra stated that Neil Cambridge tendered his resignation to the Select Board, which was accepted, in tandem with a request to become an Associate Member. He was appointed to the latter position for two years. We now have two Commissioner vacancies, and discussed the need to reach out to potential replacements.

V. New Business.

A. FEMA event on climate risk mapping. Sondra said that FEMA is sponsoring an information session on risk mapping, and suggested that it would be beneficial for one of the Commissioners to attend, on either November 28 or November 29.

VI. Correspondence. None.

VII. Items for next Agenda. Proposal from forester Maren Granstrom.

VIII. Adjourn. Without objection, Sondra declared the meeting adjourned at 6:12PM.

STCC Approved on December 13, 2023