Conservation Commission Meeting, April 10, 2024

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

STCC Commissioners present: Linda Garat, Catherine Lerme, John Poirier, Leslie Spear, Henry Spencer, Sondra Wallace

Associate Members present: Sally Merchant, Theo Pratt

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

**II. Adjustments to Agenda.** Sondra (at Theo Pratt’s request) added item V.d.

**III. Review and Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes (February 14, 2024).** Catherine Lerme made a motion to accept the Minutes, seconded by Leslie Spear, then unanimously approved.

**IV. Old Business.**

1. Welcome new Commissioner, John Poirier.
2. Commission vacancy; recruiting. No change – we still have a vacancy.
3. Earth Day Clean-Up plans. Henry Spencer will put up signs prior to the event and will contact Linda Garat regarding follow-up to the publicity she has generated. Catherine brought up the issue of tires and Leslie confirmed that she will have a truck and can transport them to the transfer station. They accept tires for free as part of a Town clean-up event; otherwise, there’s a charge. Leslie suggested that if anyone asks where they should clean up, emphasis could be placed on Buttermilk. Trash collected there could be left on the side of the road, and we will pick it up.
4. Proposed Reuse Event. Alternative proposal: Earth Day indoor yard sale. Theo wants to postpone to May or June and hold this event outdoors. Catherine suggested considering the Town Office parking lot, an idea that was well-received. Theo would have to talk to the office about it and determine a date. It was mentioned that on July 1st Hannah Moholland will assume the position of Town Administrator, and Terri Baines becomes the Code Enforcement Officer.
5. South Thomaston Forest Preserve. Henry commended the team – Catherine, Sondra and Sally Merchant – for their work on the *Land for Maine’s Future* grant application for the cost of the land purchase. Catherine commented that the LMF decision will not likely be made until months after the Annual Town Meeting. She has secured another grant, from a private foundation, to cover the fee of the surveyor. Since the foundation can only donate to a 501(c)(3), the GRLT will serve as our pass-through, taking an 8% fee, which could be made up with donations. Sondra has obtained Select Board approval to send a letter to our existing donors asking if their contributions for the land purchase could be used for something else, then to use the Listserv to seek new donations (e.g., for the legal fees to insure we have a clear title to the property, title insurance, recorded survey, the work of the forester, etc.)

Sondra reiterated that one of the conditions of sale of Jeff Smith’s property was that ATVs be barred. John Spear is working on an ordinance to be presented at the Annual Town Meeting that would bar ATVs from *all Town land.* Vis-à-vis the Maine Trails Bond (LD 1156) she said it has numerous supporters, and if it passes there should be funds available for trail development throughout the state.

Finally, Catherine noticed a buffer zone with a mountain of wood chips by the fence at the Airport (near Ballyhac Road), some of which she felt could possibly be used for our Preserve.

**V. New Business.**

1. Proposal: No Questions trash pick-up day. Not discussed.
2. Joint STCC-STCRC presentation to Historical Society May 9. Sondra and Neil Cambridge, Community Resilience Committee, have been invited by the Historical Society to jointly present our current activities and accomplishments. In addition to the solar array success, Neil might speak about developing a climate action plan and a potential collaboration with St. George to find and share a Sustainability Coordinator.

Sondra stated that it makes sense to coordinate the efforts of the STCC and the Community Resilience Committee, and Sally said that there are a lot of similarities between the two organizations. In Theo’s opinion they don’t share the same raison d'être and blending them might dilute efforts.

1. Report from March KCCC-WG meeting. Regarding light pollution and dark skies, Sondra reported that a sub-committee of the KCCC has been formed, with the goal of establishing late spring, early summer and fall (when it’s actually dark!) programming (a film, speaker, child-oriented activities, etc.)
2. Weskeag Water Sampling Program. The DEP wants water data and provides the equipment needed to obtain it. Theo asked the STCC to consider acting as a sponsor for the testing, which would not involve any financial outlay. Teams of three persons would take samplings, every other week eight times, probably from the Weskeag Marsh, the Town bridge, Ballyhac Cove, and Cuddy Cove, and potentially other sites. A mandatory online training session for new volunteers is scheduled for April 30 from 7-8:30PM. Catherine made a motion to have the STCC be the sponsor of this program, seconded by Leslie, then unanimously approved.

**VI. Correspondence.** None.

**VII. Items for next Agenda.**

**VIII. Adjourn.** Without objection, Sondra adjourned the meeting at 7PM.

***STCC APPROVED ON MAY 8, 2024.***