



**Town of South Thomaston, Maine**  
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**Selectboard:**  
Jeff Northgraves  
Sue Snow  
John Spear

Conservation Commission Meeting, May 8, 2024  
In-Person Meeting at the Town Office, with Zoom Video Conferencing

STCC Commissioners present: Linda Garat, Catherine Lerne, Henry Spencer, Sondra Wallace

STCC Commissioners not present: John Poirier, Leslie Spear

Associate Members present: Sally Merchant, Theo Pratt

**I. Call to Order.** Sondra Wallace, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:35PM.

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

**III. Review and Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes (April 10, 2024).** Catherine Lerne made a motion to accept the Minutes, seconded by Linda Garat, then unanimously approved.

**IV. Old Business.**

- a. Earth Day Clean-Up event. Henry Spencer reported that while the weather was not good, some people cleaned-up the day before the event and brought bags of trash to the GBC on Saturday, April 20. He is brainstorming ways to make our clean-ups more effective and said he will bring to our next meeting an outline listing his ideas, including to what extent the clean-ups should become "pick-ups."

Sondra suggested we consider building teams for various roads, e.g., Buttermilk, finding a captain for each team and having one person warn oncoming traffic to slow down. The team concept could be a means to make the effort social – 'get to know your neighbors' and develop a stronger sense of community. Sondra also brought up having – or not – a rain date, but if residents collect trash in advance, a rain date does not work. Henry asked if we should establish a phone number for information inquiries, including rain dates.

- b. Update on South Thomaston Forest Preserve. Sondra confirmed that the survey is in progress, and that it is possible it might cost less than originally estimated. If this turns out to be the case, the extra money could be used elsewhere. Catherine made a

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suggestion that it be designated for permanent (immovable) markers on the plot, and Sally mentioned signage delineating property boundaries.

Sondra noted that she has the approval of the Select Board to send a letter to those who donated for the cost of the land asking if these funds can be repurposed, and that she was heartened by the many letters of support for the Preserve received from town residents regarding the LMF grant application. The wording of her follow-up letter has been approved by Jeff Northgraves and Sue Snow, and she is now waiting for the okay from John Spear. Catherine added that if the donors agree, another challenge is the appraisal and since it is time-sensitive, we don't want to undertake this too soon. Sondra's letter would be followed by a letter to the entire town requesting donations, perhaps emphasizing that many grants applied for are matching grants, i.e., potential funders match all or part of contributions.

Re: the services of a forester, Catherine stated that we need quotations from at least two and preferably three of these professionals. In addition to Maren Granstrom, she has been in contact with one individual who might be available this summer and charges \$75 per hour, and she has been trying to reach – so far unsuccessfully – Paul Miller of *Forestry for You*, based in Washington, ME.

Finally, Sondra said that Governor Mills recently signed into law legislation that will place a \$30 million trails bond on the November ballot. Her understanding is that if Maine voters approve the ballot question, LD 1156 would improve non-motorized trails, but that unfortunately a large portion of the \$30 million would be allocated to trails that do permit motorized vehicles.

- c. Update on proposed Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program. Theo Pratt reported that Wes Pratt attended a training session run by the DEP. Another training session for volunteers, conducted by Kristin Feindel, supervisor of all the water quality groups for the Maine DEP, will be held on Monday, May 20, at 12:30PM at the town pier. Typically, water sampling takes about 1.5 hours, and should be done immediately after high tide. This year the efforts will be self-funded, in terms of supplies and bacteria study, although it is possible that the town of Thomaston will assist with the cost of the latter. Next year, Theo will figure out a budget, and this being an STCC-sponsored activity, it could be included in the STCC budget.

It was agreed that Theo should obtain signed permission from property owners if sampling is to be carried out on private property, or if the samplers will be crossing or parking on private property, as well as inform property owners in advance of sampling dates and times. The STCC ordinance stipulates:

No Commission member, town employee, volunteer, contractor, representative or other agent of the Commission or the Town shall enter upon any private property in performance of Commission duties without the permission of the

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property owner or leaseholder for the expressed purpose, frequency, and duration of the entry.

- d. Plans for May 9 STCC-STCRC presentation to Historical Society. Sondra and Catherine have worked on a talk that Sondra will present, mostly about the Forest Preserve, with Theo taking approximately 5 minutes at the end about the water sampling. Neil Cambridge will speak, likely for 10-15 minutes on the solar implementation and the potential collaboration with St. George to find and share a Sustainability Coordinator.

**V. New Business.** None.

**VI. Correspondence.** None.

**VII. Items for next Agenda.** Nothing to list at this time.

**VIII. Adjourn.** Without objection, Sondra adjourned the meeting at 6:20PM.

*STCC APPROVED ON JUNE 12, 2024*