



Town of South Thomaston, Maine
125 Spruce Head Road
P.O. Box 147
South Thomaston, ME 04858-0147

Tel: 207-596-6584
Fax: 207-596-7529
E-mail: terri@souththomaston.me
Website: www.souththomaston.me

Selectboard:
Jeff Northgraves
Sue Snow
John Spear

Conservation Commission Meeting, July 10, 2024
In-Person Meeting at the Town Office, with Zoom Video Conferencing

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

Associate Members present: Sally Merchant

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

II. Election of Officers. Sondra Wallace, Henry Spencer, and Linda Garat were nominated, approved, and will continue to serve as Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary, respectively.

III. Adjustments to Agenda. None.

IV. Review and Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes (June 12, 2024). Henry made a motion to accept the Minutes, seconded by Leslie Spear, then unanimously approved.

V. Old Business

- a. Earth Day Clean-Up Day. Future plans (Henry Spencer proposal). The next Clean-Up Day will likely take place in late September or in October. Henry stated that it's critical to generate more publicity about this event, including via signs at major intersections (e.g., on Buttermilk – which is laden with trash, near the red schoolhouse, etc.), and that we could consider establishing a contact telephone number for those seeking information. We cannot rely mainly on the Town email distribution list, which may have a circulation of less than 300 residents. Henry suggested obtaining two sandwich signs, which Catherine said could always be used by the Town for other purposes. He added that we should identify 4-5 "trouble spots," such as Buttermilk, with Sondra saying we should reach out to specific individuals who might be willing to form a clean-up team in their neighborhood. Leslie said she would be happy to spearhead efforts in Spruce Head and the Village.

Henry also noted that it would be helpful to find another person(s) with a truck to ferry trash to the Transfer Station, so Leslie doesn't have to do it all. Sally Merchant

said our roads should be made more walkable, with bushes trimmed and more room, in which case those on foot would naturally pick up strewn garbage.

b. South Thomaston Forest Preserve:

1. Survey. Per Sondra, the survey is completed, with Catherine stating we should make sure we have it in digital form. Sondra indicated the need for permanent in-ground monuments, i.e., physical markers establishing the principal property corners of the Preserve. She doesn't know what the cost for this would be, but we could recommend to the Select Board that this expenditure be permitted. Leslie mentioned that the stump dump has large pieces of granite which might be usable as markers. Catherine said that during a walk with Jeff Smith, he showed her several markers, which to her were not that evident, and that it would be advisable to walk the Preserve again in the fall to physically ascertain parameters.
 2. Donations. Sondra reported that the Select Board sent a second letter to our donors regarding repurposing their contributions, and that everyone but one donor agreed. She doesn't know the monetary value of these contributions. Sondra proposes to send another letter, ideally to all Town residents, soliciting donations *currently* for the appraisal, clearing the title and obtaining title insurance, environmental hazards and cleanup, forester analysis and report, and so on (in the future, we will need funds to repair and/or build access roads, build trails, signage, maintenance, storm damage repair, etc.) Sally said it would be a good idea in Sondra's letter to include a monetary goal that we aspire to achieve. Sondra also suggested that we include ongoing expenses for the Preserve as a line item in next year's budget.
 3. ATV ordinance. A very positive outcome! The June Town Meeting approved an ordinance barring ATVs from ALL Town property, not just the Preserve.
- c. Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring program.** John Poirier confirmed that the program is proceeding: the volunteers take samplings every two weeks and are capturing the data the DEP wants them to capture, including testing for E.coli, bacterial contamination, but not PFAS. John said he can speak to Theo and Wes Pratt about having DEP representatives visit and discuss local PFAS exposure, the extent to which appears to be unknown. He added that the volunteers are parking on the road, so the written permission requirement from property owners is not an issue. Sondra said that for next year's annual report, she may need some concrete details about the program – perhaps test results and how they can be used.
- d. KCCC-WG Dark Sky program plans.** Volunteers are needed for the first event, tentatively an evening program with a film, speaker, and Q&A, in late August or early September at the Owls Head Transportation Museum. When we get a firm date from the planning group, we can see who is available.

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- e. **Maine Coast Seafood.** The Select Board filed a notice of violation, then subsequently authorized taking the property owners to court, although Sondra said that this might involve a lot of time and money. She wondered if the Town could clean up the mess and send the owners the bill? Leslie remarked that it is prime property which could provide much-needed waterfront access for the Town and its residents.

V. New Business.

- a. **Proposed South Thomaston/St. George sustainability coordinator.** The Community Resilience Committee (CRC) has been working with St. George to hire a coordinator, potentially Meg Rasmussen [Midcoast Council of Governments (MCOG) Community Sustainability Coordinator]. Catherine expressed the opinion that first there should be a series of presentations by scientists/experts in their field who are knowledgeable about climate change in our area: how it is adversely affecting the water table, well management, road management, energy consumption, emergency sheltering and response, etc. Once we have this crucial information, St. George, the CRC, and the STCC - which needs to have a voice in the process of setting priorities and developing action plans and timetables - will be better able to define the essential skills and requirements for the coordinator position.

A discussion ensued about the parameters between the CRC and the STCC. There is a great deal of overlapping of responsibilities and goals, in fact, Sally stated she is surprised that there actually are two groups! She confirmed that the next meeting of the Community Resilience Committee will be held on Friday, July 19th at 4PM at the GBC.

VI. Correspondence. None.

VII. Items for next Agenda. A continuation of the discussion about the hiring of the South Thomaston/St. George sustainability coordinator.

VIII. Adjourn. Without objection, Sondra adjourned the meeting at 6:05PM.

STCC APPROVED ON AUGUST 14, 2024