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Conservation Commission Meeting, August 14, 2024
In-Person Meeting at the Town Office, with Zoom Video Conferencing

STCC Commissioners present: Linda Garat, Catherine Lerne, Leslie Spear, Henry Spencer, Sondra Wallace (via Zoom)

STCC Commissioner not in attendance: John Poirier

I. Call to Order. Henry Spencer, Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order at 5PM.

II. Adjustments to Agenda. None.

III. Review and Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes (July 10, 2024). Catherine Lerne made a motion to accept the Minutes, it was seconded by Henry, then unanimously approved.

IV. Old Business

- a. Earth Day Clean-Up Day: Future plans. Dates being considered for the next event are the end of September or October 5. Henry said we should focus on cleaning up Buttermilk Lane, with wider coverage (possibly three roads) in the future. Since Buttermilk is a long road and there is a great deal of garbage to be removed, he suggested that we segment, via signage, different sections of the road for participants to focus on. Catherine reminded everyone that for insurance purposes all volunteers need to sign up. We can have a sign-up sheet at the GBC, and potentially have drop off of trash at the parking lot of the Weskeag Marsh on Buttermilk. Henry will call the State of Maine to ask about permission to park there.

Leslie Spear commented that if residents want to tackle streets other than Buttermilk, we would, of course, welcome their efforts and they could bring collected trash to the GBC.

Finally, Henry floated the idea of asking our Fire Department volunteers if they would like to take part in the clean-up. It could be mutually beneficial, encouraging greater community involvement in conservation and emergency services.

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- b.** South Thomaston Forest Preserve. Catherine confirmed that the survey is completed. The issue now is obtaining title insurance. While we have a warranty deed for the Smith property, Cline gave only a quitclaim deed. Potentially, we will have to establish clear title to the land purchased from the latter through a quiet title suit. Catherine and Sondra will explore with LMF if we can be exempted, with respect to the Cline land, from the requirements for clear title and title insurance and, if not, what are our options.

Catherine likes to use the services of local vendors and purveyors whenever possible, and found an environmental hazard company that would charge \$2,500 for an assessment of the 131 acres in the Preserve, with a 6-months validity for the report, (and a written extension of the validity, if needed). The work could be carried out in the fall, or could wait until January or February, although a winter date might be a problem if we have a lot of snow. In addition, Catherine contacted a person in Appleton regarding the appraisal, and the fee is \$6,500.

Some time ago Maren Granstrom, the forester, quoted a fee of \$21 per acre, or \$2,751 total, plus the town land acreage. We should be able to obtain a grant from *Project Canopy* of the Maine Forest Service to cover 50% of the cost and payable on a reimbursement basis once the work is completed.

Henry asked if the Select Board is aware of these expenditures. Catherine said yes, they have no objections, and understand these expenditures are necessary to obtain the full \$67,000 funding. Sondra said we should let the LMF know where things currently stand. Henry also asked if we have full permission to transfer existing donations for use other than repaying the land purchases, and Catherine affirmed that we do, with the exception of one small donation, which may simply be that the donor has not yet had the opportunity to reply.

Leslie brought up the tiny piece of adjacent land owned by Nicholas Bourque. It's low, swampy, with no structures on it or public access. She wondered if the STCC should approach Mr. Bourque about donating this land. It was agreed, however, that we will table this until after we receive the LMF funding.

- c.** Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring program. No report.
- d.** KCCC-WG Dark Sky program plans. The current date for a short film followed by a talk by Jacob Gerritsen and Q&A, to be held in the Jean Picker Room (with A/V setup) of the Camden Library, is Saturday, November 23 from 1-2:30 or 3PM. This event will be free to the public. John Knuerr is looking for assistance on several fronts, and Linda Garat agreed to help with publicity.
- e.** STCRC proposal: South Thomaston/St. George shared sustainability coordinator. No report.

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- f. Maine Coast Seafood. Legal action is proceeding, but will take time. The Select Board is going to ask Fire Chief David Elwell to look into this issue – are people entering the property? Is there a tank full of oil? Are there fire hazards?

V. New Business. None.

VI. Correspondence. None.

VII. Items for next Agenda.

VIII. Adjourn. Without objection, Henry adjourned the meeting at 5:43PM.

STCC Approved on October 16, 2024.