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Conservation Commission Meeting, November 13, 2024
In-Person Meeting at the Town Office, with Zoom Video Conferencing

STCC Commissioners present: Linda Garat, Catherine Lerme, John Poirier, Henry Spencer, Sondra Wallace (via Zoom)

STCC Commissioner not present: Leslie Spear

Associate Members present: Sally Merchant, Theo Pratt (via Zoom)

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

II. Adjustments to Agenda. An update/discussion on the Wilson Quarry was added to Old Business, Item H.

III. Review and Approval of Special Meeting Minutes of October 16. Henry Spencer made a motion to accept the Minutes, seconded by Catherine Lerme, then unanimously approved.

IV. Old Business.

- a. Report on Fall Clean-Up Day (October 12). H. Spencer reported that 4-5 persons took part in the Clean-Up, and that a lot of trash was picked up along Buttermilk Lane. He feels that due to the volume of garbage that seems to accumulate on Buttermilk, it would be a good idea to again concentrate our efforts on it for the next Clean-Up.
- b. Report on MEACC Annual Conference (October 12). S. Wallace said that the Conference, its focus being on invasive plants, was not very well-attended, but there were great speakers. She will send the Commissioners and Associate Members the notes and slides of the keynote speaker, Chad Hammer. H. Spencer suggested that this data be posted on the Town website, and that we consider putting a sign up in the main entrance of the Town Office with a QR code, which could be scanned, with wording such as: "Do you have a problem with invasive plants?" S. Wallace said perhaps the notes and slides could be uploaded on our page of the Town website.

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- c. Update on South Thomaston Forest Preserve. S. Wallace stated that we are working with Melissa Reynolds, a very competent lawyer, to get title insurance in order to obtain the LMF grant. Ms. Reynolds does not feel that Cline's being a quitclaim deed is a problem, as the chain of title is solid. However, the Town will need to give the Forest Preserve an access easement across the original Town lot, since as a stand-alone parcel it is landlocked. She recommended, and John Spear (SB) and the STCC team agreed, that the Town should deed to itself a single parcel combining all 5 parcels of land.

Ms. Reynolds considers her work with us to be public service, and C. Lerme said that her fee will likely not exceed \$2,000. S. Wallace added that the surveyor found that the Preserve actually encompasses more than 130 acres, but we don't have to determine the location of this additional acreage.

Sally Merchant brought up the subject of the November election ballot measure question 4, authorizing bonds to design and develop trails. It was accepted by a majority of the electorate, and the maximum grant will be \$125,000. We should be able to obtain some money for trails in the Preserve.

- d. Update on Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring program. S. Wallace said that she indicated to Theo Pratt that the STCC will need a summary as to how the program has been progressing, and that this information will be conveyed to the Select Board. Perhaps water testing can be included in our budget for next year.

T. Pratt confirmed that she is working on a report. She stated that this year's program went very well, except for the fact that there were not enough volunteers. Last Friday she submitted the accumulated data to Kristin Feindel of the Maine DEP Volunteer River Monitoring Program, and it will eventually be uploaded to the DEP's website. Before our next meeting T. Pratt will circulate by email the testing results, which we can then review as a group.

- e. KCCC-WG November 23 Dark Sky program plans. S. Wallace confirmed that the publicity has been completed for this event, which will feature a film, a talk, and Q&A. The room at the Camden Library in which the program is being held is relatively small, and of course street parking is always limited, so it would be best to get there somewhat early! Hopefully, this will be the first in a series of events.
- f. STCRC proposal: South Thomaston/St. George shared Sustainability Coordinator. S. Wallace attended the Community Resilience Committee (CRC) meeting of November 8, which included this subject on the agenda. The CRC has crafted a "Work in Progress for Developing a Proposal." S. Wallace stressed the importance of the STCC feeling comfortable with this document, and that we need to have a seat at the table with regard to the scope of work for the Sustainability Coordinator. There was a brief discussion at the STCRC meeting as to if and how we should combine STCC and CRC efforts - some attendees want to keep things separate, others do not.

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- g.** Update on Maine Coast Seafood (hazardous abandoned property). During the Select Board Meeting last night, it was confirmed that part of the building has been taken down, the diesel fuel tank has been removed, and some of the other work required in the Town's order has been done. Nonetheless, a thorough clean-up still must take place. The demolition and removal costs so far were paid for by the property owners, and it is hoped the Town will be able to recoup the legal fees incurred. Re: the remaining lobster traps, if their trap tags are intact, they could possibly be returned to the owners. If this is not the case, they will have to be destroyed.
 - h.** Update/Discussion on the Wilson Quarry. Linda Garat and C. Lerme participated in last night's Select Board Meeting. Our Land Use Ordinances are very weak and in need of review and amendments, with the Planning Board bylaws and ordinances needing to be strengthened.

The Select Board suggested to L. Garat that she take a look at the ordinances of neighboring towns, Warren specifically being mentioned. H. Spencer volunteered to start studying this, and to contact the Maine Municipal Association. Our project could be to put forth concepts or create a proposal to present to the Ordinance Review Committee for consideration. This would be followed by a Public Hearing, and ultimately a vote at a Town Meeting. S. Wallace is considering joining the Ordinance Review Committee, where she would definitely be an asset, given her professional background and expertise. In addition, the Select Board suggested that concerned individuals might hire a lawyer specializing in land use issues who could, among other things, craft the wording of a citizen's petition to implement change.

V. New Business. None.

VI. Correspondence. None.

VII. Items for next Agenda. Review the Water Quality Monitoring results from the DEP.

VIII. Adjourn. Without objection, S. Wallace adjourned the meeting at 5:57PM.

STCC approved on December 11, 2024