

Minutes of Chester Conservation Commission Meeting

4:30 PM September 1, 2022 – held on Zoom

Members: Lisa Wahle, Rick Holloway*, Sandy Prisloe, Margot Burns*, Ted Taigen, Kate Hair (* = not in attendance). Guest: Kim Price, Chester Fair Zero-Waste organizer

Meeting called to order at 4:39 pm

Minutes: The minutes of the August 2022 regular meeting were approved unanimously.

Audience of citizens: None in attendance.

Correspondence: email concerning large a tree across Pattaconk Brook (See New Business).

Old Business

- a. EnviroTips: **Lisa** set up a Google Doc for Envirotips and shared it with the Conservation Commission (CCC) and Administrative Assistant. Commissioners are encouraged to contribute. Recycling tips, mostly provided by **Rick**, will continue through September and energy-related tips to begin in October.
- b. Open Space Mapping: no new report.
- c. SustainableCT
 - EV Charging stations – **Sandy**, working with the Chester E (energy)-team, reported that the Board of Selectmen approved signing three Letters of Intent with *Earthlight* to initiate the formal analysis for installing three Level 2 charging stations (Water St, Maple St and Laurel Hill parking lots). *Earthlight* will work with *Eversource* to determine needs at the three sites, including meters and connectors. This does not obligate the town. The E-Team requested \$60,000 of ARPA funds for the installation, which would likely be reimbursable through *Eversource* and/or DEEP (Volkswagen settlement) grants.
 - “Zero Waste” Chester Fair. See Waste Management below.
- d. Cedar Lake invasive plant issues. Benthic barriers are working well (see also New Business).
- e. Waste Management. Discussion with guest Kim Price
 - Chester Fair: **Kim Price**, organizer of the Zero Waste effort, reported that over 53% of waste was composted or recycled. With some improvements, he feels that >95% could be achieved next year. He has received much positive feedback from publicity on social media and in the news. Sandy and Lisa, who worked stations at the fair, felt that most people were cooperative and thankful for the effort. More public education/outreach and bright signage may help improve results.
 - Lobster Festival, September 10: **Ted** felt it would be difficult to commit to Blue Earth this year to make composting available within tight timeline. Blue Earth would charge \$200 for bin/compost pickup, and suggested reducing the dumpster size accordingly from All Waste. Ted explained that this is not a big money-maker for Rotary, and the

Lobster Fest crew works continuously beginning to end of the event. Kim Price said he would work with Ted to make a go of it. Nearly all of the waste from the Fest is compostable or recyclable, except contaminated aluminum foil and perhaps the starch utensils. There may be more folks willing to work the festival waste reduction effort.

f. Native and Invasive Plants subcommittee (NIPS).

- **Margot** forwarded an email exchange with Canton Public Works regarding implementation of their roadside vegetation management plan. So far, Canton has been mowing roadsides when necessary with no apparent directed management of invasive plants.
- **Lisa** will submit something for Chester Events on invasives/natives by September 9.
- **Lisa** will work with **Kate** to get 3 more Fact Sheets added to the town CCC webpage. The town website will be updated soon. This upgrade may affect the QR code on the pollinator sign (see below).
- **Ted** mentioned that he thought some roadside Japanese knotweed had been chemically treated near the exit from the fairgrounds.

g. Pollinator Garden and Sign. **Lisa** completed the design for an 18" x 24" interpretive sign; it was reviewed by the Native-Invasive Plant Subcommittee and CCC. She received a quote from Vacker Signs for \$884 (including shipping) for a metal park-style frame and post, and sign on heavy duty laminate. In an email to Lisa, First Selectwoman Janecek confirmed that the Public Works crew could assist with installation. **Ted** submitted a request and received approval from Chester Rotary for funding for the sign and mount; he will ask for an additional \$500 matching grant for plant seedlings to be given away on Earth Day (April 22, 2023) and possibly at Squirrel Day the following weekend. He asked the CCC to contribute \$100 for seedling purchase as match. **The Commission voted unanimously to approve the expenditure of \$100 for pollinator seedlings for next Earth Day.** Discussion ensued about possible additional funding from Sustainable CT and Rockfall Foundation.

h. Chester Dams Panel Discussion October 16, 4 PM Chester Meeting House. To be cohosted by the CCC, Historical Society and Land Trust. Six panelists will explore the topics of history, engineering, environmental concerns, dam-owner experience, archeological review and emergency management. CT DEEP declined to participate. Nathan Jacobson, whose book on the history of Chester dams is in review, will introduce the discussion with a brief history of Chester dams.

i. DEEP dock permit notification. Lisa wrote to DEEP asking for clarification of the notification requirements for draft permit approvals. No answer yet.

j. Conservation Commission Annual Report due to the town by 30 September. Lisa will base this on the format used in previous years.

k. Commission/Board chairs to meet with First Selectman 13 September.

- I. Vacancy on Commission. Catherine Cahill was unable to attend this meeting, but said she will be able to make the October meeting.

New Business

- a. Margot had contacted Lisa about the possibility of the CCC and Cedar Lake Committee applying for a grant for a boat-washing station on Cedar Lake. To be discussed at next meeting.
- b. Lisa was contacted by Felise Cressman about a tree that had fallen across Pattaconk Brook just upstream of the Carini Preserve and confluence with Great Brook. Lisa met Felise and Cameron Evangelisti (acting foreman of Public Works) to look at situation. Cameron and Felise felt this tree and another further upstream may pose a threat by causing water and debris to back up toward town. Cameron will contact first selectwoman and other town officials. Removal may require a crane or other heavy equipment.

Carryover items:

- From June 2022 - **Margot** will see if RiverCOG knows of contractors who remove Knotweed.

Adjournment: 5:55 PM

Next meeting via Zoom: Thursday, October 6, 2022, 4:30 PM

Respectfully Submitted, Lisa Wahle