

**Calais Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes**  
**Calais Town Office**  
**Tuesday, January 15, 2019, 7:00 pm**

**Present:** Stephanie Kaplan, Larry Bush, Neal Maker, Julie Hand, Mark Brown, Pat Johnson

**Absent:** Drew Lamb

**Guests:** Katie Lane-Karnas (recording minutes), Denise Wheeler (Selectboard Chair), Richard Maizell, Joanne Garton (Urban and Community Forestry Program)

1. The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.
2. Agenda revisions or additions: None.
3. Approve minutes: Larry Bush made a motion to approve the minutes of the 10/24/2018 and 12/13/2018, as edited. Julie Hand seconded, and the motion passed 4-0 and 5-0 (Mark Brown abstained as he was not a member at these meetings; Pat Johnson was not present at the time of the vote; Julie Hand abstained as she was not present at the meeting).
4. Update with Selectboard Chair: Selectboard Chair Denise Wheeler attended and gave an update of the Memorial Hall project. The Commission Chair requested she locate any document that includes specifications around the Memorial Hall project's use of Conservation Fund monies.
5. Conservation Fund Balance: The current balance is \$61,129.80. This amount includes the prior year's balance as well as the FY19 appropriation of \$8,000.00.
6. Conservation Fund Guidelines (Revisions & Application): The Commission reviewed the current status of revision work to the Conservation Fund Guidelines. Richard Maizell, former member and continuing contributor, commented on the Commission's having identified oversight as a necessary component to add in to the process for receiving Conservation funds. Denise Wheeler made the Commission aware of the frustrating ongoing situation of a Conservation Fund recipient who remains out of compliance with Town dog ordinances, despite being asked to comply and posing a risk to the public. She and the Commission discussed whether there is a way to define the responsibility of any recipient to comply with all local state and federal laws, ordinances, policies, etc. Discussion ensued over the Town's authority and ability to enforce a penalty in a matter such as this.

Commission members, Richard and Denise had reviewed and edited the Guidelines ahead of the meeting and delved into discussion over the evolving

document. The Chair had investigated the Guidelines of a number of other towns, which led her to investigate how state statute underlies the language and intention of conservation commissions' guidelines. This led to discussion of where the Conservation Commission's guidelines' purpose was initiated and on what it was based, and the statute under which the Commission has the authority to establish a fund. Title 10 of the Vermont Statutes, Chapter 155, was reviewed; the Chair reported that other towns' commissions cite this statute as the reference for their commission's guidelines.

The group debated the merits of having the Guidelines be vague enough to allow the Commission to interpret a possible effort as they see fit, or be significantly more spelled out to define for the Commission and public the intention of the Guidelines. The Chair commented on her research into other towns' guidelines and how they are structured. Larry shared his feedback including the existing language's "clunkiness" and reflection of changing values. They discussed how to have grant applicants demonstrate that their proposal reflects the values and spirit of the town plan, and decided to put the onus of responsibility on a grant applicant to demonstrate consistency with and alignment with the town plan.

Topics discussed included permitted uses of the funds, criteria for use of the funds, level of specificity vs. broadness of the criteria and adding language to clarify that funds are awarded at the discretion of the Commission (not automatically upon proving meeting the criteria).

Richard suggested creation of a subcommittee to make recommendations for a framework to the larger group, and volunteered to serve on the subcommittee and the Commission agreed; Larry Bush will join him and Pat Johnson will work on language to contribute. Commission members will submit input to Richard and Larry ahead of the next meeting.

7. Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Plan: The Chair updated that Neal had prepared a list of tasks and questions regarding EABs; Joanne Garton from the Urban and Community Forestry Program had replied with a lot of information, and attended the meeting upon invitation to discuss this information and EAB grant opportunity offered through her office. (The grant application is due by January 31, and must be completed by March 2020.) Discussion included possible uses of the matching grant and what the in-kind contributions would entail. Denise reminded the Commission about the level of involvement required by administrative office staff in managing the grant; this led to clarification of the role of a consultant versus an employee—a consultant would not raise issues of payroll and insurance. Joanne reminded the Commission of the extensive amount of road mileage in Calais and the

need for parameters; use of high school students for volunteerism was considered.

Possible permitted uses discussed included an iPad for volunteers completing the inventory; planting in spaces that are going to have a large or special ash taken down; public education, ribbons, outreach materials for town residents; signage for trees that have been identified for removal by the Town; hiring a forester to perform the inventory; creation of an ash bench and historical placard; safety training for local tree professionals or road crews for taking down ash trees; combining efforts for EAB with Green Up Day.

Joanne described a free (for towns) roadside mapping ash app, "Collector," which was developed by her office, and includes a training program for defining protocols; this could be accomplished by volunteers or a paid consultant. Collector is part of a GIS mapping program that compiles the work of all data collectors; the data is not public information, but a Town is permitted to share output. Collector offers three "blank" fields that can be utilized for a town's specific purposes such where a special tree is, whether a tree is leaning in toward the road, etc.

Joanne stated that winter can be an easier time to identify because you can easily see the bark; in summer, it can be mistaken for box elder. In winter it is easier to see a bit further into the woods.

The intention of replacing trees where an ash tree has died is typically thought about in terms of culturally important trees, such as outside of a library or school, and could be more relevant to an urban area. Elm trees also have disease issues, and tend to die quite young, and their structural integrity while they are dead is quite strong. There are not that many of them and they are small along roadsides. EAB, in contrast, is considered an "infrastructure failure" because ash trees die particularly ungracefully, splintering and cracking unpredictably and shattering upon hitting the ground. It is more dangerous to take down a dead ash tree than a live tree. For example, electric companies will not send a person up to take down ash in winter. When EAB hits, damage is up in the canopy first (woodpecker "flecking" to retrieve borers just under the bark), with small branches attempting to grow out of the lower tree and D-shaped exit holes from the borers.

An infrastructure concern is the effect to power lines, and Joanne advised that power companies have many miles and so many trees; clearing rotations are typically every 5-10 years. The Commission decided to be in touch with Washington Electric Cooperative regarding a plan for EAB tree cleanup.

Joanne pointed out that Calais is in a good position for creating a plan and Neal's list of action steps are a great start.

A question was considered: the need for an EAB-specific committee (including Selectboard, utilities, road crew, experts and volunteers); Joanne commented that perhaps a totally separate committee is not needed but it will certainly involve work—and that her office is willing and happy to continue to support the town.

Joanne explained that the existing mapping work she created already in Calais was limited to monitoring once every .25 miles and looked at a scope of criteria slightly different than an EAB inventory would entail.

Joanne did a demonstration of the Collection app on her device. It can be used on individual personal devices and could be stored on a Town iPad. The Chair considered that the future use of the inventory app and technology could be applied to many different functions.

Joanne made a list of the Commission's grant questions needing further research, and a group of Commission members decided to meet in the next week to begin the EAB grant application process. They discussed the life cycle of EABs and research from Detroit, where EAB was first identified, which shows that there seems to always be a residual EAB population, even after the peak of ash trees have died off.

8. Other business: None.
9. Public comment: None.
10. Adjournment: Larry Bush motioned to adjourn at 9:24 pm; Julie Hand seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Date: 1/15/2019 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas  
*Approved by the Conservation Commission at the 3/6/2019 meeting*