

Calais Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Calais Town Office
Wednesday, November 6, 2019, 7:00 pm

Present: Stephanie Kaplan, Larry Bush, Neal Maker, Julie Hand, Pat Johnson (attending by phone until 8:25 pm)

Absent: Drew Lamb, Mark Brown

Guests: Katie Lane-Karnas (recording minutes)

1. The Chair called the meeting to order at 7 pm.
2. Agenda revisions or additions: The town office has requested an annual budget request from all boards and commissions.
3. Approve minutes: Pat Johnson moved and Julie Hand seconded to approve the minutes of the October 5, 2019 meeting; the motion passed 5-0.

Neal Maker moved and Larry Bush seconded to approve the minutes of the October 2, 2019 minutes, as edited; the motion passed 4-0 (Julie Hand abstained).

4. Conservation Fund Balance: The balance is \$69, 846.31.
5. Membership: The Commission discussed communication with potential future members and considered establishing a rudimentary interview process for candidates. Julie will begin a written document for a future meeting.
6. Coordination with DAB, PC, ZA: One role of the Commission, as established by statute, is to advise the Development Review Board and Planning Commission on issues that come up that affect the natural resources of the town. Stephanie recalled the situation regarding a fen in a gravel pit, at which she represented the Commission at the DRB hearing and in mediation. Stephanie will contact the chair of the DRB, the PC, and the Zoning Administrator to ensure communication is maintained around any applications that come in and touch on natural resources issues. The group considered the few decisions posted from this past year's DRB meetings.
7. Association of Vermont Conservation Commission: The Commission discussed joining the statewide Association of Conservation Commissions. Larry commented on the superior quality of the association's conference this fall. The consensus was that it would be worth the \$50 annual membership fee. Stephanie will talk to Denise about including this in the budget.
8. Emerald Ash Borer Plan for Calais: Calais's grant award (\$2,000) ends on March 31, 2020. The grant will reimburse the town for the expenses incurred

of printing and mailing costs to residents about EAB (approximately \$750), and snacks from the volunteer meeting. Joanne Garton advised that it would be fine to contract with a nursery to use the grant monies for trees now, with plans for springtime planting. Identifying locations for planting will need to happen ahead of selecting trees.

Continuing efforts include:

- work on the management plan;
- coordinate fall purchase of trees for springtime planting (Neal);
- laminate tags for identifying ash trees (Neal) and
- identify four roadway corridors where there's a density of ash trees that would be important to replace with other trees (Julie, Neal, and Larry);
- identify two hazard trees to be replaced with two newly planted trees, with publicity.

The Commission discussed demonstrating the quantity of ash trees by using flagging to mark trees along a section of well-traveled roadway, along with laminating signs to include at the ends of the demonstration area. Permission from landowners will need to be gained.

Stephanie presented two 2020 grant programs that have become available, and the Commission reviewed criteria and considered whether they may be appropriate for Calais. The cost of treating a tree with pesticides is \$12-15 per diameter inch, every two years. A 20-inch tree is approximately \$300 every two years. Neal reported that the Road Commissioner is working on getting hourly rates from professionals on the costs of tree removal to begin to think about the allocation of town funds for cutting trees in anticipation of the EAB impact. Neal commented that it is expensive to hire someone to do tree removal, but significantly more expensive to contract for a dead/hazard tree to be removed. The town of East Montpelier is examining costs for tree removal; they have marked a row of ash trees near U32 for the public to see what will be lost when they are removed. Stephanie will contact them about sharing what is learned about costs.

Further efforts for publicity, such as a workshop, communication at Town Meeting Day, a mailing, the roadside corridor demonstrations, and utilization of Front Porch Forum were discussed. Three members will join together to drive around town and make a recommendation to the Commission on optimal locations for corridors for marking ash trees.

The group considered what information could be pursued to get a clear idea of the cost of the EAB impact. It could be useful to know how much tree clearing could be accomplished for \$5,000. A conversation between all invested

bodies in town (road crew, Selectboard, Conservation Commission) was discussed as a planning step.

Larry mentioned that he has learned that the WEC utility easements allow WEC to remove trees they consider a risk to utility lines even if they are outside of the WEC right-of-way, without needing permission from property owners.

9. Bliss Pond Forest: Julie commented on the need for better marking of trails in the Bliss Pond Forest, perhaps a different color for the main trail's blazes. Larry and Drew will consider options. Further discussion of this item was tabled until a subsequent meeting.
10. Fish & Wildlife Board Appointments: Larry commented that he is willing to coordinate with the Association of Conservation Commissions about the Calais Commission's concerns interest in having a conservation perspective on the Fish and Wildlife Boards. Further discussion of this item was tabled until a subsequent meeting.
11. Shoreland Zoning: Stephanie had spoken with PC Chair Jan Ohlsson and learned that there is time to continue the conversations around shoreland zoning—the Planning Commission will not be bringing the proposed zoning to Town Meeting 2020. According to recent information, recommended buffers in other states are significantly bigger than Calais's proposed buffers, and Noreen (who attended the previous meeting) is thinking of addressing this in the Lakes and Streams Committee's written feedback to the PC.
12. Other business: The Selectboard has requested an annual budget request. The group discussed the cost of their recording secretary and membership dues for the Vermont Association of Conservation Commissions. Clarification of the original establishing the Conservation Fund and authorization of the Fund at Town Meeting was discussed.
13. Public comment: None.
14. Adjournment: motioned to adjourn at 9:15 pm; seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Date: 11/7/2019 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas

Approved by the Conservation Commission at the 12/11/2019 meeting