

**Calais Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes**  
**Calais Town Office + Zoom Call**  
**Wednesday, September 8, 2021, 7:00 pm**

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

**Guests:** Katie Lane-Karnas\* (recording minutes), Tom Blachly\*, Kyle Booth, Tom Cronin\*, Reed Cherrington, Denise Wheeler\*, Danielle LaQuerre\*, Joe LaQuerre\*, Alfred Larrabee, Scott Bassage\*  
*\*attending via Zoom*

1. The Chair called the meeting to order at 7 pm. Denise Wheeler passed along the sanitizing protocol requested by the Town Office staff for use of their space (the Town Hall is not available for hybrid meetings at this time because of unresolved Consolidated Communications internet problems).
2. Agenda revisions or additions: The Chair noted there will be additional discussion on updates which the Planning Commission has been working on as well as on reclassification of a Class 4 road (the Schultz property).
3. Approve minutes: Larry Bush moved and Julie Hand seconded to approve the minutes of the 5/5/2020 meeting, as edited. The motion was voted and passed unanimously.

Larry Bush moved and Neal Maker seconded to approve the minutes of the 8/19/2020 special meeting, as edited. The motion was voted and passed unanimously.

4. Conservation Fund Balance: The Fund balance is currently \$44,978.18.
5. Chapin Town Forest: The Chair laid out the relevant details. The Commission went to the Selectboard and talked about the Chapin Town Forest site visit and plan to create a parking area to allow public use of the forest. The Selectboard had asked for a plan, details, and cost. An additional piece of this project may involve discussion of reclassification of part the road.

The group reviewed the estimate provided by the Road Commissioner for total material cost (\$2,223.73), for the area that was marked at the site visit (not a particular number of cars). If the Selectboard continues to plan on the Highway Department doing the work for the project, this estimate is the cost for creating the parking area and improving the road into the forest for the plow and a plow turnaround.

The next step would be flagging of the exact parking area and how the road is going to be widened and where, along with a public meeting at the location to view these details. Denise Wheeler will see if the Selectboard can schedule a site visit at their 9/13/2021 meeting (Selectboard, Road Commissioner, Conservation Commission, and the public).

Tom Cronin inquired about the number of planned parking spaces; Denise asked if the parking and plow turnaround would be the same area (dual-purpose), or different areas. Scott noted he has been there on naturalist outings a few times and there were six (or more) cars and he

commented in favor of room for enough cars to park and not block resident access. The Chair noted it does seem a different area would be needed for plow turnaround and parking; the Road Commissioner pointed out that the answer would be informed on whether (or not) the road will be upgraded to Class 3. He explained that if the parking area is used regularly and wants to be kept open, he would need the road to be upgraded to Class 3 for near-daily plow truck access. If it is left as Class 4, it could be plowed less regularly and potentially by a contracted plow.

The Chair reminded that there had been discussion of reclassification of the road in the forest as a trail, not as a Class 3. Larry suggested there is the option to begin creating the parking area itself, using the forest, and work on trails, and postpone any discussion or planning for winter access. Scott agreed that having access in the spring and summer would serve a very important purpose, and parking access in the winter could be postponed indefinitely.

Another issue that was raised involved the public's use of the section of Chapin Road that changes from class 3 to class 4 after the mailboxes. The history is that at the time the developer created the Blackberry Ridge subdivision, he did not want to upgrade that section to a Class 3 road, so the Selectboard required that the section be maintained by the residents (this is in their deeds). Some neighbors are concerned that if numerous people use that section to access the forest after the parking area is built, there will be increased maintenance costs that would fall on the residents. Larry pointed out that there are legal implications for the neighbors if the town were to do any maintenance of that road section since the residents' deeds require that they maintain the road.

Danielle Laquerre commented by chat, "I share Toms Concerns and feel like this is trying to be rushed and I am wondering why? Sorry my speaker not working at the moment...."

The Chair commented that the Commission continues to want and plan for a parking area to allow public use of the Town forest.

**Julie Hand made a motion to proceed with a parking area, and leave the winter maintenance to a future decision.**

**Larry Bush made a friendly amendment to concurrently plan developing a trail system.** Tom Blachly commented that the Trails Committee is raring to go for trail. **Julie Hand accepted the friendly amendment; Larry seconded.** Neal asked that the Commission commit to revisiting the traffic discussion. Tom Cronin requested that the trail system be made first and the parking area be constructed after a period of time monitoring usage. **The motion passed 5-0.**

The Commission members acknowledged that if that portion of the Class 4 road gets heavy use by the public that results in the need for more maintenance, the issue should be revisited. **Neal Maker moved that the Commission commit to revisiting the traffic (on the Class 4 section that the neighbors maintain) a year after the parking area has been created to see if has become a problem at a public meeting. Mark Brown seconded.** Julie and Denise

commented that landowners always have the opportunity to raise road issues with the Selectboard; Mark reiterated that the meetings are public and the Commission wants to hear about any issues that may occur. **The motion was voted and passed 4-0 (the Chair abstained and noted she doesn't think it is necessary since road issues can always be brought to the Selectboard).**

The Road Commissioner asked for clarification on his next steps. He agreed to investigate the specific area necessary for a 6-car parking area and to go flag it so everyone can see what it would involve. He also suggested that the entrance to the forest may need work to improve it. The Chair said this would be discussed at the site visit.

Danielle Laquerre commented by chat: "Water run off is going to our property right now. Trees getting cut down how many?" The Chair responded that the Road Commissioner has shared that his crew's work will address the same water runoff/erosion standards as is used on all projects, and a culvert would address water wherever necessary. Joe LaQuerre vented his anger about the parking lot in a string of verbal comments and accusations; he had not participated in the hour+ agenda item on this issue and the Chair muted him when he refused to stop yelling. The Chair noted she does not appreciate being yelled at and that there has been plenty of opportunity for members of the public to raise concerns, and that the Commission had already addressed the same concerns he was raising here again as well as those of Danielle Laquerre.

6. Fall Foliage Walk: Larry suggested a Bliss Pond Forest Fall Foliage walk on October 2, including sharing the new, more visible trail markers with the local public. He agreed to write up a proposal for the Commission's review. Neal moved to delegate the Fall Foliage walk planning and write up to Larry, without requiring Commission approval; the motion was seconded, voted, and passed unanimously.
7. Tree Ordinance: Neal updated that after further roadside walks and observation it seems optimal that any tree 6" or larger would fall under the shade tree ordinance and smaller trees would trigger consideration with room for judgement; he is drafting an ordinance proposal to bring back to the Commission.
8. Ash Tree and Emerald Ash Borer (EAB): Neal commented that he sent a few insects from the EAB traps to the lab, and it seems none of the July specimens were EAB, and he does not think the more recent specimens were either. Scott also sent some specimens in but did not receive any affirmative communication back. The Chair noted that the CC should do follow up for private landowners in explaining options for dealing with their ash trees, including the information about insecticide treatment on the Community Forestry website. This will be discussed further at the next meeting.
9. Adjournment: A powerful thunderstorm abruptly ended the meeting.

Date: 9/11/2021 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas  
*Approved by the Conservation Commission at the 9/29/2021 meeting*