

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

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

**Guests:** Katie Lane-Karnas (recording minutes), Alfred Larrabee (Road Commissioner), Scott Bassage

1. The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm.
2. Agenda revisions or additions: Road Commissioner Alfred Larrabee was added to the agenda (item three, discussion of hydroseeding and mowing invasives).
3. Road Commissioner's Hydroseeding Proposal: The Road Commissioner attended to discuss using a hydroseeder (finhydroseeder.com) for mulching roadside ditches (this would replace the Town's current use of mulch hay, reduce the number of people required for mulching from three to two, and improve safety for the workers). He described benefits of the hydroseeder: grass grows faster; the mulch consists of shredded newspapers and wood and holds water well; the material that is sprayed is dyed green and helps identify the edge of the roadway. The mulch comes in a wrapped plastic bale, and the user mixes in the seed (the Road Commissioner prefers red clover—it has its own root system which resists erosion and discourages invasives growth, it grows low to the ground and requires less mowing, and is a perennial). The hydroseeder allows for control of which seeds are spread around town; the alternative, hay, removes control of seeds contained in that hay, including possible invasives. State guidelines require any opened ground be mulched within 24 hours, and hydroseeding would make this a more attainable goal. East Montpelier has just purchased a hydroseeder. The Conservation Commission supported the idea but expressed some concern about the ingredients in the dye and asked the Road Commissioner to gain information on the content of the dye, whether the mulch can be purchased without dye, and to refrain from use of fertilizer. The Road Commissioner agreed to find out what's in the dye and get that information to Stephanie.

The budget allows for roadside mowing of invasives twice during the 2019 season (each mowing takes about two weeks). The group considered Bishop's Weed, Wild Chervil, knotweed, phragmites, and poison parsnip. They asked the Road Commissioner to schedule for early June and the beginning of August. There was discussion about the problem that mowing knotweed spreads it via the shoots rather than seeds and that the state invasives website advises not to mow it. The Road Commissioner pointed out that knotweed growing very tall blocks traffic visibility in some locations,

causing a safety issue. The Commission considered options for management that do not spread knotweed further and tabled that conversation for the future. The Commission supported the road crew's cutting of knotweed for road safety visibility (at both the first and second mowing). In the case of knotweed on roadsides without a visibility safety issue, the Commission did not come to a consensus on whether to post "no mow" signs, cut by hand, ask the mowing operator to raise the mower, or mow it.

4. Approve minutes: Stephanie made a motion to approve the minutes of the 3/6/2019 meeting. Julie seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.
5. Conservation Fund Balance: The Conservation Fund balance is \$61,179.80 (\$50,000 of this amount is pledged to the North Calais Memorial Hall project).
6. Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Planning and Ash Tree Inventory: Neal brought the group's attention to a map that indicates roadsides that have been inventoried for ash trees using the tracking app. There was a significant amount of public volunteer interest at the initial meeting, but the following inventory weekends were very cold and rainy. The Commission planned to meet in the coming week to refamiliarize themselves with the tracking app process and allow folks to continue work on their own. Scott Bassage offered to loan his iPad for inventory work. Stephanie will ask Joanne if we can borrow 2 ipads for using the inventory app.

Neal commented that his inventory work so far illustrates the pervasiveness of ash trees. Almost all of them will die, and the ones along the roadsides will likely fall into the roads. The group considered methods for prioritizing action in light of the large quantity of ash trees. Scott Bassage commented that one purpose of this work is to keep the Selectboard up to snuff on the extent of the problem; for example, for their planning on how big a chipper to buy.

The group discussed the potential quantity of dead ash trees resulting from the EABs. Neal communicated an idea whereby local landowners could opt into a program designed to gather, transport, and make use of dead ash trees of significant diameter, and the Commission was enthusiastic. They revisited the idea of offering public information sessions for landowners. Neal described the life process of the emerald ash borer, mentioning that once obvious signs are visible, the death of the tree is imminent (one to two years). The group examined borer marks on a piece of ash tree that Pat Johnson brought from her yard. Neal didn't think they were made by the emerald ash borer based on the particular pattern, but rather that there are many beetles that borrow under tree bark and make these kinds of tracks.

Drew inquired whether the Commission had discussed town forests and harvest management plans in light of the EAB issue. The Commission has not, and Larry commented that although Calais has much smaller tracts of land than the state identifies as needed for old growth, the same goals as the state can still be accomplished in Calais. Larry is working on a document regarding forest management and will send it to the group. The group decided to invite Dan Singleton to their next meeting to discuss these issues.

7. Conservation Fund Guidelines Revisions: The Chair discussed her research into the creation of the Calais Conservation Commission and Conservation Fund, which occurred at Town Meeting in 1989. The Chair read from the statute cited that allows creation of the Commission and that defines conservation fund activities. The Chair suggested she would work on the latest version of the fund guidelines and update as needed.
8. Calais Stormwater Master Plan: The Chair commented on the interesting details and recommendations of the Calais Stormwater Master Plan report (created by a group of consultants working with the CVRPC). The first version of the list identified twenty problem areas in Calais and after meeting with the Calais advisory committee, the consultants refined the list to the five most significant erosion locations in Calais, the worst of which is on Moscow Woods Road.
9. Other business: Next meetings are scheduled for Wednesday, June 19, and Wednesday, July 10, 2019.

The Commission discussed changes to the land formerly owned by Stanley Morse.

10. Public comment: None.
11. Adjournment: motioned to adjourn at 9:15 pm; seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Date: 5/19/2019 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas  
*Approved by the Conservation Commission at the 6/20/2019 meeting*