

**Calais Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes**  
**Calais Town Office**  
**Thursday, August 23, 2018, 6:00 pm**

**Present:** Stephanie Kaplan, Larry Bush, Neal Maker, Julie Hand, Maddy Morgan

**Absent:** Drew Lamb, Pat Johnson

**Guests:** Scott Bassage, John Brabant, Richard Maizell, Katie Lane-Karnas (recording minutes)

1. The Chair called the meeting to order at 6 pm.
2. Agenda revisions or additions: Richard Maizell will attend to discuss the Calais Conservation Commission Fund Grant Application; foxes are added, Emerald Ash Borer, and Bliss Town Forest student visit will be discussed under "Other Business." Item three is revised to table the draft letter until the next meeting.
3. Testing for pesticides in Calais streams—John Brabant: Selectboard member John Brabant is the Calais representative to the CVRPC and serves on the Clean Water Advisory subcommittee as well. He discussed the state's focus on nutrient availabilities in waters, while the presence of pesticides is not typically addressed. He described the link between large scale farming practices, especially spraying herbicides in place of cultivating between corn rows, and herbicides getting into food and waterways. He reported on his work bringing attention to this issue at the last two Clean Water Advisory meetings and that body's receptivity to the idea of a pilot for testing for pesticides in Calais waters. John identified large corn field locations that drain into Calais waters, and proposed researching and creating a protocol for a water sampling pilot program; he discussed variables in sampling methodology and possible state lab assistance. This potential task is outside of those defined by the state, but John reported on wide support from many within the Advisory Committee.

John shared his extensive knowledge on farming and food systems, explaining how our dependency on this type of agriculture for our food has the result of levels of pesticides exceeding EPA standards being found in products like Cheerios. He pointed out how largescale agriculture has locally bought up properties with support from land trust funds. The Commission and John discussed potential waters to test. John will develop a very specific plan over the winter, and the Commission invited him to request any help he requires and to bring the plan back to the Commission for their support and recommendation. The Commission invited John to come back as his work evolves.

4. Conservation Fund Balance: The balance was reported as \$53,129.80 (not included interest accrued).
5. Approve minutes: Neal Maker moved, and Larry Bush seconded, to approve the minutes of the 6/12/18 meeting, as edited. The motion passed unanimously.

Julie Hand moved, and Larry Bush seconded, to approve the minutes of the 7/19/18 meeting. The motion passed 4-0 (Maddie Morgan abstained; she was absent from the July meeting).

6. Obtaining new gravel source for Calais—Scott Bassage: Scott Bassage reported that the project of obtaining a gravel source for Calais is a long-term effort that would require the long-term support and effort of a group of people. Scott brought samples of “bank-run gravel” and “modern gravel” for visual comparison. The Commission and Scott discussed the difference between a source from a stream and from crushed granite, and the variabilities due to granite crusher operators’ skills. The history of the Town and McCullough Crushing, Inc. was discussed.

Scott and the Commission discussed that Town ownership of a gravel pit would allow for renting an operator for gravel crushing for only a short period of time each the year. Questions raised included: How could we get an appraisal; could we get economic and legal analysis (including potential cooperation with neighbor towns); could we get support for a bond? Scott pointed out that you can’t make sand, but you can make gravel. They discussed the improved outcome to neighbors if the Town owned the McCullough pit. The Commission and Scott discussed the best way to continue this work forward. Larry Bush reported on the success of the project model Scott brought to the Historic Preservation Commission in restoring the Town Hall. The Chair discussed the advantages of a subcommittee of the Commission working on this issue. Scott said he would think about how he wants to proceed and get back in touch.

7. Richard Maizell created and shared a draft Conservation Commission Fund Grant Application. Richard and the Commission discussed details for creating an application and process for the Fund. The Commission needs to revise its Conservation Fund Guidelines which include the same criteria that Richard used in his document. The Commission may reach out to Matt Peters, the Regional Planning Commission and other towns regarding creation of the funding criteria document, and Richard agreed to offer his expertise as the process moves forward.

8. Beavers: The Commission reviewed an article with information on beaver solution expert Skip Lyle and his creative solutions beyond “Beaver Baffles;” the Chair and the Selectboard Chair have considered inviting the expert to attend a joint meeting, including the Road Crew. The Commission reviewed history from a beaver activity location at a culvert on Kent Hill Road.
9. Other business: Larry Bush reported that a professor from VTC wants to bring students to look at Bliss Forest’s White Cedar swamp. Members of the Commission may attend. Larry also reported that Eric Sorensen is able to come to the Commission’s next regular meeting to discuss the Act 171 process. Larry will send a link to documents titled “Vermont Conservation Design” that Eric suggested the Commissioners read ahead of their meeting together.

The Commission discussed the petition requesting eliminating killing foxes for sport and the connection of a healthy fox population to the reduction of Lyme disease, and intends to keep following the issue of trying to eliminate this brutal and counter-productive activity.

Emerald Ash Borer current information and the differing Montpelier and Berlin policies on the Borers were reviewed. The Commission discussed having a policy for Town properties and forests; the Chair will communicate with Joanne Garton. Julie Hand will investigate the details around the pesticide that is used in a port in ash trees.

10. Public comment: None.

11. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7:58 pm.

Date: 8/24/2018 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas

*Approved by the Conservation Commission at the 9/11/2018 meeting*