

**Calais Conservation Meeting Minutes**  
**Town Hall and Zoom**  
**December 7, 2022 7:00p**

**Members present:** Neal Maker, Larry Bush, Mark Brown, Stephanie Kaplan, Julie Hand (recorder), Tracy Coolidge.

**Guests:** ORCA, Noreen Bryan, Charlotte Bassage.

- 1) Minutes from November approved.
- 2) Town report is due December 15, Stephanie will draft it and send it around for comments.
- 3) Budget: In the past the Conservation Fund was given \$8,000, but it was reduced to \$5,000 in recent years due to budget constraints. There is a little less than \$25,000 left in the Conservation Commission fund. (In recent years the fund helped purchase the Armstrong Farm and the improvements to Memorial Hall.) The town needs to increase the money in the fund so we can purchase and conserve property that might become available.

Tracy (new member this year) asked about possible funding for a Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) update, as in New Hampshire the NRI was done every 10-15 years. Our NRI was done in 2016 and 2017. Everyone agreed it would be a good idea to get it updated periodically.

Tracy also asked if the fund could be used to work on managing invasive species. Strategies to combat invasives include mowing before plants bloom and volunteer pulling, depending on the plant. Noreen said that because Phragmites are fairly limited, it would be a good idea to try to eradicate them now before they spread. A few members of the Conservation Commission had worked with Noreen to pull Phragmites in the past but more should be done. (Apparently spraying sugar water is helpful to reduce Phragmites.)

It was suggested that we might hire someone with expertise to target which species and methods of management might work best. We can put suggest that as a potential budget item, but the Conservation Fund is probably not appropriate for this purpose, as its primary use is for purchasing land for conservation, although it can also be used for education. Julie will contact Marcus at Redstart for ideas about how Redstart surveys and works to eradicate invasives.

Tracy mentioned methods she knew included areal mapping, road-side/drive-by surveys, road crew observations, maps. We can discuss this further at our January meeting.

**4) Shade Tree Plan.** Neil: no public comment received, other than Dan Singleton who provided comments at the Selectboard meeting. There is a silvacultural exemption in zoning, but it does not apply to the Shade Trees Preservation Plan. After some discussion, it was decided that the definition of a 'Shade Tree' will be any tree in town ROW or other town land that is over 8" in diameter.

'Hazardous Trees': How/when/where/who decides a tree is considered hazardous? Discussion: It should not be Tree Warden's responsibility to identify that town's hazardous trees. However, if asked the Tree Warden can advise whether a tree is hazardous or not.

Stephanie suggested that the Shade Tree Preservation Plan should make it clear that the legislature used the term "shade tree" to denote trees that a town wants to protect, but these trees do not have to actually provide shade. There was general agreement with this, and Stephanie said she would send some proposed language to Neal to add.

**5) Shoreland Zoning.** Calais, Lakes and Streams (CLSC) met with the Planning Commission (PC) on December 6. They further discussed Shoreland Zoning revisions and will meet again with the PC on December 20.

**6) Curb Cut Ordinance.** Discussion about extent of permissible regulations around curb cuts and whether and how the curb cut ordinance can include provisions to protect natural resources on and around the curb cut. Currently there are no regulations protecting Vernal Pools at/near road crossings. However, there are recommendations/best practices that should be followed, as Vernal Pools are considered a Wetland Resource. Requiring a 100' buffer between the Vernal Pool and any human disturbance (ie Curb Cut) is an example of a best practice around a Vernal Pool.

It's important to include Vernal Pools when considering Curb Cuts as Vernal Pools are not well understood by the public - most people don't know about them.

Establishing a Curb Cut in a Wildlife Corridor should be prohibited. Sight lines are also critical in evaluating a Curb Cut.

When cutting trees for sight lines, Tree Warden should be consulted.  
Wetland Buffers - Any development (including a curb cut) in a wetland needs Wetland Permit from the State.

Questions: What is the best way to evaluate a potential curb cut that crosses a wetland or wildlife corridor? To what extent should a driveway be considered as part of a Cut? Can Curb Cuts be an added requirement when applying for a Zoning Permit? Or should Curb Cuts be decided by the Selectboard? Discussion to be continued.

**Next Meeting January 4th, 2023**  
**Town Office**