

OFFICIAL MINUTES: Business Meeting
Eliot Conservation Commission
Eliot, Maine 03903

DATE: February 3, 2021

OFFICERS:

Chair: Kari Moore
Vice Chair: Christina Karas
Secretary: Lynn Bubley
Treasurer: Alice Lynch

THIS MEETING WAS HELD VIRTUALLY ONLINE. THE CALL-IN INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC WAS PROVIDED BY the Town PRIOR TO THE START OF THE MEETING.

1. Call to Order and Roll Call via Remote Access:

The meeting was called to order with roll call at 6:34 PM by Kari Moore. In attendance: Kari Moore (Chair), Christina Kara, (Vice Chair), Alice Lynch (Treasurer), Lisa Wise (Member), Lynn Bubley (Secretary), Peter Egelston, (New Member), Cyndy Camp, (New Member), Carol Castellan, (Alternate), Doug Warrender, (Alternate), Tomas Dundzila (Public), Jeff Tash, Presenter, New England Cottontail Habitat Restoration Coordinator, Jordan Miles.

2. Welcome New Members:

Introduction of new members to current members of the Conservation Commission. New members consist of Peter Egelston and Cyndy Camp with alternative members including Carol Castellan and Doug Warrender.

3. Public Input

There is no public input at this meeting.

4. New England Cottontail Update:

Jeff Tash, New England Cottontail Habitat Restoration Coordinator, presents an overview of the New England Cottontail habitat. Jeff works with landowners to create a favorable habitat for the New England Cottontail (NEC) and other species that are endangered in Maine. There are approximately 250 identified NEC's in the State of Maine. The NEC is rarely seen and is more abundant late in the summer. Development is the #1 threat to the NEC. The NEC need a dense shrubland type woods to survive. work

in Eliot to identify the NEC is conducted in the winter through fecal pellet identification. Fecal pellets are sent to local labs for identification. Great Thicket National Wildlife Refuge was established to conserve young forest and shrubland habitat that supports species such as NEC. The first parcel of land in Maine was recently established in South Berwick and Berwick.

Biologists are focused on Eliot because it has been identified as the #2 hotspot for the NEC in the State of Maine. There have been 9 parcels identified in Eliot as favorable habitats for the NEC. The NEC Habitat Restoration program has reached out to some landowners for conservation and potential sale of these lands the federal government in support of the National Wildlife Refuge. A larger outreach effort is underway to recruit additional landowners for habitat conservation. Tools are being created to engage landowners identify characteristics that define a favorable environment for the NEC. Commission members inquired how we could help this effort. Education and outreach: Continue to post information on Social Media, get the word out, help introduce ourselves to the identified key landowners, and communicate with the Town Manager about this issue. Kari Moore will reach out to Dana to see about NEC habitat maps.

Maine Fish and Wildlife Map:

(Maine.gov/ifw/fish-wildlife/wildlife/beginningwith-habitat/maps/index.html)

Utilize FaceBook page. Information should be provided to help people identify NECs and appropriate contacts if the rabbits are identified. Jeff Tash Cory and reach out to people to be on the lookout for NEC, have information about how to contact Jeff or Cory Sterns from Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.

Cory Sterns is trying to access the IFW property adjacent to the York Pond town forest for habitat conservation efforts. Kari Moore will reach out to Cory to establish communications and determine if/how the town can support.

5. Review and Approve Past Minutes:

Edits were made to the meeting minutes dated January 6, 2021. Minutes were reviewed and accepted unanimously with edits.

6. Financial Report/ Budget:

Alice reports to us that Jim Tessier has been paid for the road maintenance at Johnson Lane. This is for the town's part of road maintenance to the Town Forest. The remaining balance in the Conservation Commission bank is \$28,903.30. The town is recommending that \$5000.00 be set aside for the land bank on the June Ballot. Information about our budget and land bank was provided to the new members by Kari Moore. Alice suggests we re-visit the financial wording on the Johnson Lane agreement to clearly identify Conservation Commission requirements. Alice will reach out to Dana with her concerns.

7. Project Development/ Permit Review:

There were no projects/ permit review submitted to the Conservation Commission for this month. Kari is looking for a volunteer from the Commission to attend the planning board on a regular basis.

Draft Ordinance Amendments- Kari forwarded to the Commission for review, a document from Jeff Brubaker that included amendments to the current ordinances regarding "auto graveyards." There is new language to capture more protections and define what an auto graveyard is. Public hearings on these are scheduled in March prior to the June voting, so there is still time for edits should the Conservation Commission wish to review. Stormwater- Christina Karas asked about groundwater contamination around these auto graveyards. Any areas of contamination should be brought forth to the Town Planner. Will reach out to Shelly Bishop.

8. Education/ Outreach:

- a. Invasive species: Tom Dundzila has been coordinating invasive species fact sheets and outreach material. Tom was unable to stay for this portion of the meeting. Kari will send out Tom's material for Commission review. The State of Maine does have an app that allows tracking of invasive species. Kari will send out the information on a February webinar. Lisa recommends that we get out the information out to the town, so they have this information.
- b. Back Yard Bird Count- This is sponsored by Audubon and is a citizen initiative. This will help with bird conservation and will happen February 12-15. Go on to the National Audubon website and enter the birds you have seen.
- c. Grant notice- Lisa brings to our attention a grant opportunity that is approaching-
 - PREPA (Piscataqua Region Environmental Planning Assessment)
- <https://prepestuaries.org/resources/prepa/>

- And the associated grant opportunity - <https://preestuaries.org/proposals-requested-2021-prepa-grant-program/>
 - d. This is a small project grant that encompasses 42 New Hampshire towns and 10 Maine towns, all situated on the banks of the Piscataqua River. Proposals are due March 31, 2021. Clean-Ups- Carol expresses an interest in Town Clean-Ups. She informs us that the head of Public Works will supply clean up bags and will pick up the trash that is collected. Could we schedule a clean- up in April? Doug suggests partnering with a school, scout troop, or youth group. Information could be posted on “Eliot Strong” website or “Eliot Connect.”

9. Round Table:

Alice- Is trying to contact the Transfer Station to find out what their protocol is for taking invasive species yard waste. She called Public Works and is waiting for a callback. It would be worthwhile to see how other town are handling disposal of invasive species to prevent.

Cyndy- Can we create PDF's that can be posted for public to view. PDF's for topics such as Back Yard Birding and Clean-Ups? Posted on “Leave no Trace” link. The Conservation Commission does have a Google Docs page that houses Conservation Commission documents. There was talk about creating an Instagram account that can be shared with FaceBook. This will facilitate only 1 posting for the 2 sites. Kari Moore will inquire with the town about document management and creating and Instagram account.

10. Next Regular Business Meeting:

Wednesday March 3, 2021 at 6:30 PM

11. Meeting is adjourned at 8:17 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Bublely

Secretary

CC: Eliot Town Clerk, Commission Members, Commission File