Southwest Harbor Conservation Commission

Meeting Minutes

August 2nd, 2023

**I** In attendance: Francine Mayhew (Presiding), Kristin Hutchins, Kathleen Slack, Ann Judd, Ellen Scull, Eleanor Park; Zoom: Ann Ratcliff, Elena Scotti, Terry Powers. Excused: Jane Ayres, Valerie Bodner, Dick Dimond; Absent: Jim Geary. Guests: Misha Mytar (zoom), Aimée Williams.

Ellen moved and Kathleen seconded to adopt the agenda; all in favor. No member present had a conflict of interest with the agenda. Kathleen moved and Ellen seconded to accept the minutes of June 6th; all in favor.

**II** Reports

**Treasurer**  No report

**Tree Warden Update**: Eleanor reported that a tree belonging to Susan Plimpton on Dirigo Road had been looked at and Eagle Arborculture had sent in an estimate for work to remove it. The Tree fund does not cover removals on private property, but Eleanor was willing to call the power company to see if they might remove it. She was also going to check with the Town Manager for some help with the cost of removal because the Town had done some ditching work around the tree and the tree had been negatively impacted.

At our next meeting September 5th we will be preparing the Tree Fund Appeal.

**Rhoades Park:** Ann J reported that as part of our 25th anniversary, we participated in the Flamingo Parade on July 15th with a decorated truck, lots of candy and artificial butterflies and many smiles. Fortunately, it was only very lightly raining! The Butterfly Release is on for July 27th. Visitation has increased although the weather has been cool and wet. Deer predation is at an all-time high. Two schools had field trips in June, and the COA Summer Field Studies also brought a group of campers in June. Martina Dittmar, our volunteer educator, has been leading the Field Studies every Friday for the Junior Naturalist group (Children from 6-11) for July and August.

**Veterans Park:**  Ellen reported that she will work on locating some plantings for the Veterans Park shrubs that are old and need replacement. An appeal letter will go out in November to try to raise some funds to help pay for improvements. Ann J has asked for a grant for plantings from the Garden Club of Mt. Desert and will hear back about it in August. Elena offered to help write the appeal letter.

**III Chris’ Pond Park** – Review of Discussion for August 22nd Selectboard Meeting.

*General Stewardship* - Ann J reported that the Selectboard Chair Carolyn Ball has asked that the language be changed on the sign. Jane, if back, and Ann will work with Carolyn and Marilyn Lowell, Town Manager, to come up with language acceptable to them. Conservation Commission members signed up to monitor each week at the Pond in July and August, and so far, with one exception, reports have been good. Dick Dimond spoke to the Fire Chief who told him that fires are permitted at the Pond providing there is someone 18 years or older to monitor the fire until it is extinguished. Dick was in touch with the Police Chief who said that the Pond is being checked two or three times a day this summer because of some security issues there last summer. Discussion of the Shed on the property was postponed to a future meeting.

*Engineering* Kathleen and her son Chris, who is a geologist, visited the pond earlier in the summer and his initial observation was that because the pond is very shallow, if there was a dam failure, the spillway would be minimal. Ann Ratcliff will be in touch with recommended individuals and engineering firms that Misha knows who had experience with inspections, planning, and repair of the Hamilton Pond in Bar Harbor that failed in 2018. A formal inspection report could offer recommendations for any repairs and review different repair/maintenance options.

*Tree Work* Eleanor received quotes from Eagle Arborculture for removal of problem trees, including an aging birch tree and an apple tree. The birch would require permission for removal from Danny Harper; the tree is on his property but on the Pond side of his privacy fence close to the property line, where unstable limbs are hanging over the Pond’s parking area. There is more work to do to clean up around the Pond, but these two trees are a priority in the near future.

*Pond Environmental Studies* Valerie will be in contact with Billy Helprin of Somes Meynell Wildlife Sanctuary and Bonnie Norwood from Pemetic School about initiating studies for Pemetic School middle schoolers on water quality and controlling aquatic plants.

*Volunteer Sourcing* *and Fundraising/Communications* will be discussed at a future meeting.

*Property Survey* Misha reported that Tom Benson has completed a survey plan of Chris’ Pond with set pins. The three-acre parcel of portions of the Deardon and Letcher lots will be offered to the Town for a land transfer as soon as possible. Misha will bring the survey plan to the Selectboard meeting to present it as part of the legal documentation for the land transfer.

Misha mentioned that in addition to the federal grant from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, there is a second Recreational Trails program grant could serve our needs. Elena will follow up with Carolyn on the grants.

The Conservation Commission is to return to the Selectboard on August 22nd to present information about Chris’ Pond.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, September **5th**