**Present:** Marge Badois, Chair; Gene Harrington, Vice Chair; Deb Lievens, member; Dave Heafey, member; Bob Maxwell, member; Susan Malouin, member; Mike Speltz, alternate member

**Absent:** Tiffani Macarelli, member; Jim Leary, alternate member

**Also present:** Michael Bazegian, GIS Manager/Comprehensive Planner; Glenn Aprile, Conservation Ranger

M. Badois called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. She appointed M. Speltz to vote for T. Macarelli.

**CUP – Buffer Reduction Request**

**CUP – Buffer Reduction Request – 13 Catesby Lane (41-17)**

A request for a buffer reduction was presented to the Commission to reduce a 100-foot offset to a duck pond. The resident requested a reduction up to the drainage easement to create a flat area at the foot of his stairs, due to the slope of the property. He would like to install a retaining wall and patio at the drainage easement line. This would also allow him to address a runoff issue between his and the neighbor's property that prevents grass from growing in this area.

The Commission clarified the location of the proposed patio and discussed alternate locations. They also discussed the issue of the lawn growing in the buffer, which is not a permitted use. The Commission noted that the buffer ordinance does not allow for a patio.

The Commission recalled the developer requesting a buffer reduction, but could not remember the specifics of the decision. They determined a CUP was approved in 2018, but were unable to find out what it applied to. They said they will review the conditions of the 2018 CUP and contact the resident.

**Old Business**

**Litchfield Conservation Commission**

Jayson Brennen, Chair of the Litchfield Conservation Commission, shared that their Commission sets goals each year. One of their goals this year was to visit a neighboring Conservation Commission to introduce themselves. He shared a map of the conservation areas in Litchfield. He suggested the Commissions meet annually to discuss various issues, such as maintaining conservation properties. They discussed budgeting and the range of duties of the conservation ranger.

**Forest Management Plan for the Musquash**

Charlie Moreno of Moreno Forestry presented a forest management plan for the Musquash. He reviewed the contents of the plan. He noted the plan will cover an area of over 1,000 contiguous Town-owned acres. They will do approximately 100 hours of field work and mapping, and then meet with the Commission to discuss management objectives. He noted they will perform a forest inventory to create a baseline of what they find on the property.

C. Moreno reviewed the projected hours involved, the timeline, and the proposed cost. They would most likely begin in July 2024, complete the fieldwork in October, meet with the Commission in November, and produce a first draft by the end of January 2025. The total cost would be approximately $25,000.

The Commission discussed the need to do a forest improvement cut and the logistics involved. C. Moreno will send the plan and a contract to the Commission for review.

**Conservation Ranger**

Ranger Aprile said he obtained over 19,000 images from the Kendall Pond Conservation Area over a two-day period. However, there was nothing major to report. He suggested purchasing three Spypoint cameras that send images directly to his phone, which will be safer than accessing cameras in the winter to obtain images. He will submit a proposal to the Commission for consideration.

**Beavers**

M. Badois reported the results of her and Ranger Aprile's recent visit to Red Fern to inspect the beaver activity and associated flooding. The Commission discussed possible solutions, including trapping the beavers and installing a beaver deceiver. They agreed to contact the beaver expert.

**Financial Report**

D. Lievens shared the October financial report.

**Easement Monitoring**

D. Lievens reported Arianna from the Rockingham County Conservation District (RCCD) will be visiting the Ingersoll property on December 14. There have been reports of ATV issues. She noted possible funding sources for help with blocking off the access for ATVs.

**Forest Society Billing**

M. Badois presented a bill from the Forest Society for Lithia Springs for $19,063, which will be paid from the Open Space fund. M. Speltz broke down the costs for the Commission.

***M. Speltz moved to approve payment of $19,063 to the Forest Society for work on Lithia Springs. G. Harrington seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.***

**New Business**

**Merrill/Schulze Easement & Environmental Study**

M. Speltz provided the Commission with the Merrill/Schulze easement and environmental study for review. He said no environmental conditions were found to cause the Commission to not be interested in the property. He reviewed the easement and some of the activities allowed. The Town Council will consider this at their next meeting and give the Town Manager final authority to sign the easement. The goal is to complete the process by the end of the year.

***M. Speltz moved the Commission recommend to the Town Council that they accept this easement as written and enter into an agreement with Ken Merrill and Caroline Schulze to acquire a conservation easement on their property. G. Harrington seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.***

**Approval of Minutes**

**November 14, 2023**

On line 70, correct to reflect that D. Lievens recused herself from the discussion, not the Commission. On line 86, D. Lievens is an owner, not a resident, and correct Nevis to The Nevins. On line 91, correct to reflect that D. Lievens returned to the discussion.

***G. Harrington moved to approve the minutes from the November 14, 2023, meeting as amended. D. Heafey seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.***

**Adjournment**

***G. Harrington moved to adjourn the meeting. D. Lievens seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.***

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Hanggeli

Recording Secretary