

Southwest Harbor Conservation Commission Minutes

Wednesday, January 3, 2024 @ 4:30 PM
Town Offices and by Zoom

I. Call to Order:

Voting Members Present: Ann Ratcliff, Co-Chair; Francine Mayhew, Co-Chair; Kristin Hutchins, Secretary; Kathleen Slack; Kathy Lindquist; Eleanor Park. **Excused:** Ellen Scull

Associate Members Present: Dick Dimond and Valerie Bodner and by Zoom: Ann Judd, Acting Treasurer; Terese Powers. **Absent:** Jim Geary

II. Agenda, Approval / Modifications: Kathy moved, Ann R seconded to adopt the agenda as presented. Passed, 6-0-0.

III. Public Comment: May be made in person at the meeting or submitted, prior, to: townclerk@southwestharbor.org. In answer to a question from Aimée, Ann R said Ann J is acting as the CC's treasurer.

IV. Approval of Minutes: 23.12.6. Eleanor moved, Francine seconded to accept the minutes of 23.12.6 as presented. Passed 6-0-0.

V. Treasurer's Report: Francine has been busy writing thank you notes for the donations for the special fundraiser for Veteran's Memorial Park. The fund has collected between \$10,000 and 11,000 toward the goal of \$16,000. We have promised also, \$2000 from the Garden Club of Mt. Desert and \$1000 from Frost Farms.

The Tree Fund has collected about \$5000. Charlotte Rhoades Park fund has collected about \$33,000-34,000. With about \$30,500 in checking, Ann J recommended the CC put \$25,000 in savings. Kristin moved, Kathleen seconded to remove \$25,000 from the CR Park fund from checking and put it in savings. Passed, 6-0-0.

In answer to a question from Dick, Ann J and Ann R said the Veteran's Park fundraiser is not an annual event. Letters requesting donations went out in early November. In the future the CC might consider asking for a small reserve for the Park's annual maintenance, but larger maintenance projects might need a fundraiser every 20 years. (It has been nearly 20 years since the Park was made over for the Centennial. This recent effort was initiated by a comment from the Park's most recent architect, Bruce Riddell who noticed the plantings needed to be refreshed.) There's a donations box in the Park which typically yield about \$200 (soggy) annually.

Tree Fund requests go out late August-early September.

Charlotte Rhoades Park fund requests are mailed late June.

Louise Soucy will prepare a quarterly report to be shared at the February (?) meeting. Ann R will review the report before the meeting to see whether the CC should ask Louise to attend CC's full commission review.

Francine read a thank you note from the gardeners at the Maine State Prison. The inmates have started a monarch program and the Charlotte Rhoades Park donated some milkweed and some monarchs.

VI. New Business:

A. Inventory of Town Resources: Kathleen and Kathy have offered to commence an open lands index. The Town's 2010 Comprehensive Plan will provide a starting place. Additionally, they have been in touch with Maine State Conservation Commissioner, Fred Snow and the Town of Bar Harbor which has a good index. The

Commission agreed that we should work closely with the Select Board and Planning Board as this index is developed.

VII. Old Business:

- A. Tree Warden:** Eleanor reviewed the maintenance of hazardous trees. ‘Jim’ at Versant was happy to learn SWH has a tree warden and if the CC can work effectively with Versant, that will help with the maintenance of potentially hazardous trees.

In response to a question from Terese about replacing trees, Ann J said that in 2000, SWH participated in the New Century Tree Fund and the CC has been saving to do that again. Norway maples in town are aging and may need replacing. The CC should work with private landowners to take care of our trees and the trees located on private property that may affect public safety.

Ann R reminded the CC that the buffering standards in the Land Use Ordinance were a mechanism for maintaining the comfort and attractiveness of the Town and should be reviewed.

In choosing trees, especially at Harbor House and on the Pemetec School Green, compaction of the feeder roots can be an issue. The CC will want recommendations for plantings that can withstand the heavy use of those two locations.

- B. Veterans’ Park:** Replacement plantings can begin this spring. **The four flowering crab apple trees that were planted over a year ago will be monitored for health and fertilization needs.** Future planning for the maintenance of the Park should include ‘rugged’ species. The CC should publicly thank the donors to this project and should find an appropriate way to acknowledge in particular the donations made in memoriam. Perhaps the Annual Report is the place to acknowledge these?

Dick offered to help Francine with the thank you notes.

- C. Chris’s Pond:** Kathleen departed the meeting at 5:15 PM.

1. Friends of, Maintenance Plan: With all the recent rain, Valerie has moved the observation points for two of the observation points for the channelized flows upstream as the previous observation points are under water.

Ann R is working to help form a Friends of Chris’s Pond group. Ryan Donahue, Greg Crossley, Abe Noyes and Gina Silverman have joined. The Friends should include people with diverse interests – not just winter users. Ann and the Friends will draft a maintenance plan that will describe the work and when it gets done and by whom.

D. Charlotte Rhoades Park: Winter work includes working on the website, a page for ordering tickets to the annual butterfly release and also making a plant database.

VIII. Adjournment and Schedule Next Meeting: Wednesday, February 7, 2024 @ 4:30 pm.

Kristin moved, Kathy seconded, to adjourn the meeting. Passed, 5-0-0.

THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION RESERVES THE RIGHT TO TAKE ACTION ON ANY ITEM THAT IS LISTED ON THIS AGENDA. *Public comment, limited to 3 minutes per speaker, is an opportunity for the Commission to listen to concerns and receive information from the public. The Commission will not engage in dialogue but will investigate as appropriate. Speakers and Commission members should be always respectful and professional.*