

**Draft Minutes of the**  
Hartford Conservation Commission  
April 6, 2020

**Members Present:** Jon Bouton, Angie Emerson, Dana Hazen, Mary Hutchins, Katie Mann, Lee Michaelides and chair Tom Kahl.

**Staff Present:** Planner Matt Osborn.

**Others Present:** Resident Dave Brown, County Forester A.J. Follensbee and HCC Selectboard Liaison Alan Johnson.

A remote meeting of the Conservation Commission in compliance with the Vermont Open Meeting Law was held on Monday, April 6, 2020. Tom Kahl called the meeting to order at 7:20 p.m.

1. **Additions/Changes to the Agenda:** Tom Kahl asked if there are any changes or additions to the agenda. There were none.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Tom Kahl asked if there were any changes to the minutes of March 2, 2020. Being none, Tom stated that the minutes are approved as written by unanimous consent
3. **Forest Management Plan for Town Forest:** Windsor County/Orange County Forester A.J. Follensbee was present to discuss the Draft Forest Management Plan that he has been working on over the last few months. A.J. proceeded to go through the Plan section by section and providing a background of forest management activities over the past eighty years. A.J. noted that the former log landing is the site of the trailhead parking area. He recommends against using it and suggests creating a new log landing in the north of the Forest and one in the south.

There was discussion about the need to cut woody vegetation in meadows around the former reservoirs. The work could be done by the HCC or the Hartford Area Career Technology Center.

A.J. noted that focusing cutting in Sections 4 and 5, will address forest health and have less impact on recreation trails. The HCC concurred.

There was discussion about the need to hold off on the scheduling the community walk in the Town Forest until the COVID-19 emergency is over. The HCC agreed, but wanted to get on the Selectboard agenda soon to update them on the Plan and planned forest management activities. Matt Osborn agreed to request getting on their agenda.

The HCC agreed to get comments back to A.J. regarding the draft Forest Management Plan. Tom Kahl suggested providing them in single track changes document that will go to Matt and on to A.J.

Chair Tom Kahl thanked A.J. for his work on the Plan update and for taking time to discuss the Plan with the HCC. A.J. noted that he has a letter of agreement that he will provide to the Town.

4. **Green-Up Day:** Matt Osborn reported that he received word from Green-Up Vermont that Green-Up Day was rescheduled from Saturday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> to Saturday, May 30<sup>th</sup> on account of COVID-19. He noted that he responded to a survey of Green-Up Day Coordinators after consultation with Tom Kahl. Matt stated that he is hopeful that Green-Up Day will happen on May 30<sup>th</sup>. The HCC agreed to postpone the scheduled May 4<sup>th</sup> visit to the ravine next to the Advent Camp.
5. **Natural Resource Landowner Outreach:** Tom Kahl was pleased to report that we received responses from three property owners in regards to the seven letters that were sent out in January.

Tom and Jon Bouton met with one property owner on March 9<sup>th</sup>. They also talked with and agreed to meet with another property owner after the COVID-19 emergency declaration passes. The HCC agreed to postpone sending out the remaining three letters until after the COVID-19 emergency

## 6. Town Forest:

- a. Trails Committee: Tom Kahl reported that due to COVID-19, the May 9<sup>th</sup> trails work-day will be postponed to a later date. Tom, Matt and Katie will discuss next steps.
- b. VYCC Work Crew: Matt Osborn reported that due to COVID-19, the VYCC will have to reschedule their visit the Town Forest in April. He also noted that the date for the scheduled VYCC two-week work crew is uncertain at this point.
- c. Game of Logging: Tom Kahl reported that due to COVID-19, the Game of Logging Levels 1 and 2 (a chainsaw education class) scheduled for May 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> respectively in the Town Forest was cancelled. The Hartford Area Career Technology Center would like to reschedule the class on October 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup>. The HCC consented. Jon Bouton will be marking and coordinating with the HACTC which 12 to 20 trees can be cut for both classes.
- d. Snowmobile Signs: Mary Hutchins reported that she will post no snowmobiling signs on the Moose Brook and W.B. Brown trails in the fall, and that VAST will supply the signs.
- e. Trails Grant Application: Matt Osborn reported that he contacted Clayton Morlock of the Upper Valley Mountain Bike (UVMBA) and a decision on the grant application submitted to the Vermont Mountain Bike Association in February was put on hold due to COVID-19. The UVMBA submitted the application to the Vermont Mountain Bike Association on the Town's behalf.
- f. Boundary Signs: Jon Bouton reported that he will provide a sign template to Matt Osborn to review. Matt noted that a town spending freeze was issued recently on account of COVID-19. Jon asked why the freeze had been issued. Alan Johnson responded that with so many folks losing their jobs, they may have difficulty paying their property taxes in August.
- g. Town Forest Recreational Plan: Angie Emerson reported that a sub-committee comprised of Jon Bouton Lee Michaelides and Angie has been working on an update to the 2002 Recreation Management Plan that will be incorporated into the Draft 2018 Recreation Management Plan that was developed by consultant SE Group. The sub-committee has met twice and expects to have a final draft for the HCC to review at the May 4<sup>th</sup> HCC meeting. Angie noted that the focus now is on the text. Once the text is completed, the next step will be how to incorporate into the 2018 Recreation Management Plan.

7. **David Chang Conservation Area Invasive Plants**: Matt Osborn reported that the Town has a prohibition on the use of glyphosate on town properties. Glyphosate is the active ingredient in Roundup. Dana Hazen noted that with the ban, it makes it more difficult to treat woody species. As an alternative, he suggested starting with treatment without glyphosate herbicide of the Black Swallow Wort on the property. The HCC agreed.

9. **AVCC Tiny Grant**: Matt Osborn reported that the Annual Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions (AVCC) Tiny Grant deadline was extended to May 1<sup>st</sup>. He noted that he spoke with an AVCC Board member and they were supportive of an application to treat invasive species with

herbicide on a conservation parcel especially when there is a local in-kind match. Dana Hazen agreed to work with Matt on the proposal, and Matt will prepare the grant application.

10. **Block Party Recycling:** Angie Emerson reported that the Hartford Community Coalition Block Party is on hold due to COVID-19. She noted that they have made progress on making it a zero-waste event.
11. **Linking Lands Alliance Maps:** Matt Osborn reported that he will obtain the maps once the town spending freeze is lifted.
12. **Stream Restoration Visit:** Katie Mann reported that the site visit has been put on hold due to COVID-19.
13. **Quechee Lakes Land Sale:** Matt Osborn reported that he hopes to mail the letter to the Vermont Land Trust with the description of the natural resource value of the Quechee Lakes Corporation (Taurus Investment Holdings) 640-acre property that is for sale.
14. **HCC Awards Plaque:** Matt Osborn reported that he will work on developing a design with a local sign maker and seek approval of the design and specific location for the plaque. It was agreed that because of uncertainty when the Block Party will occur this award may be postponed until next year.
15. **Vernal Pool Walk:** Jon Bouton reported that the vernal pool walk has been cancelled due to COVID-19. In the future, he plans to coordinate future vernal pool walks with the Vermont Center for Ecostudies and Vital Communities. He reported that a group of Hartford residents have formed an amphibian team during the spring migration to monitor roads where amphibians are crossing and help protect them.
16. **Bird Outreach:** Mary Hutchins reported that the population of Bobolinks is down 50%. She noted that there are recommendations to assist property owners with meadows on how to protect Bobolinks. Tom Kahl suggested providing a link to the information on the HCC website. The HCC agreed. Mary agreed to send Matt the links to post on the HCC webpage.
17. **Next Meeting:** Tom Kahl noted that the next HCC meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 4<sup>th</sup>. Tom noted that we will be voting on HCC officers.
18. **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:11 p.m.
19. **Meeting Action Items:**
  - a) The HCC agreed to get comments back to A.J. regarding the draft Forest Management Plan. Tom Kahl suggested providing them in track changes in a single document that will go to Matt and on to A.J.
  - b) Matt Osborn agreed to request getting on a Selectboard Meeting agenda to discuss forest management. Jon Bouton and Matt will work on the presentation.
  - c) Tom, Matt and Katie will discuss next steps for 2020 HTF Trail Maintenance because of the COVID-19 restrictions.
  - d) Mary Hutchins reported that she will post no snowmobiling signs on the Moose Brook and W.B. Brown trails in the fall. VAST will supply the signs.
  - e) Jon Bouton reported that he will provide a sign template for boundary signs for the HTF, David Chang, and Maanawaka Conservation Area to Matt Osborn for review.
  - f) The Recreation Management Plan sub-committee will meet and come up with a final draft to present to the HCC to review at the May 4<sup>th</sup> HCC meeting.

- g) Dana Hazen agreed to work with Matt on the AVCC grant proposal and Matt will prepare the grant application.
- h) Matt Osborn will mail the letter to the Vermont Land Trust with the description of the natural resource value of the Quechee Lakes Corporation 640-acre property that is for sale.
- i) Matt Osborn will work with a sign maker on developing a design for the HCC Conservation Award plaque.
- j) Mary Hutchins agreed to send Matt Osborn the links to information on Bobolinks to post on the HCC webpage.