

Approved Minutes of the
Hartford Conservation Commission
May 7, 2018

Members Present: Angie Emerson, Dana Hazen, Tom Kahl, Shawn Kelly, Lee Michaelides and chair Jon Bouton.

Staff Present: Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: Resident Don MacLeod and Selectboard Liaison Alan Johnson.

A meeting of the Conservation Commission was held at the Hartford Town Hall, 171 Bridge Street, White River Jct. on Monday, May 7, 2018 in Room 2. Jon Bouton called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Introductions were made.

1. **Additions/Changes to the Agenda:** Jon Bouton asked if there are any changes or additions to the agenda. Tom Kahl suggested the Hartford Community Coalition Block Party. The HCC agreed.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Jon Bouton asked if there are any changes to the Draft Minutes of April 2, 2018. Being none, Jon stated that the minutes are approved by unanimous consent as written.
3. **Election of Officers:** Jon Bouton noted that it is time to elect officers. He asked for nominations for chair, vice-chair and treasurer. Tom Kahl nominated Jon Bouton as chair. The motion was seconded by Shawn Kelly. Jon indicated that he is willing to serve another year, but would like to step down next year. The motion passed by a unanimous vote. Tom Kahl nominated Angie Emerson as vice-chair. The motion was seconded by Jon Bouton. Angie noted that she has too much on her plate at this time and declined the nomination. Angie Emerson nominated Dana Hazen as vice-chair. The motion was seconded by Shawn Kelly. Dana accepted the nomination and the motion passed by a unanimous vote. Angie Emerson nominated Tom Kahl as treasurer. The motion was seconded by Dana Hazen. Tom accepted the nomination and the motion passed by a unanimous vote.
4. **Natural Resources Review:** Tom Kahl noted that the HCC has drafted letters to property owners of eleven of the highest ranked non-governmental properties in Hartford based on natural resources. The letter thanks the property owners for stewardship of their property and offers assistance of the HCC with identifying resources for property owners in managing their property. The letter will be accompanied with a list of resources and websites. The HCC agreed to send out the letters.
5. **Hartford Town Plan Update:** Matt Osborn reported that a Town Plan Steering Committee was formed to work with planning staff and the Planning Commission on the update of the Town Plan. The Steering Committee has met twice and will be meeting on May 14th. Matt noted that Angie Emerson represents the HCC on the Steering Committee. He reported that the Steering Committee is planning five village meetings to solicit public input into the plan update. The meetings will take place in late May to late June. Matt stated that the current Plan is 312 pages and isn't particularly engaging. He stated that there is widespread support from the Town Plan Steering Committee and staff to reduce the amount of information in the plan and make it more engaging. Jon Bouton suggested placing some of the materials in an appendix. Matt noted that the Natural Resources Chapter was last updated in 2003. Alan Johnson noted that given the short timeline to update the Town Plan (May, 2019), there is not enough time to do a major update. However, the Selectboard and town manager agreed that following adoption, the plan update process will continue on a full update. Alan also noted that the Energy Commission is working on the Energy Chapter of the Town Plan and seeks to create an actionable plan with brief goals and bullets.

Related to reducing the size of the Plan, Shawn Kelly wants to ensure that cross references aren't eliminated. He noted that the Natural Resources Chapter is referenced in the Land Use Chapter.

Matt suggested that the HCC form a working group to review the Natural Resources Chapter and report back to the HCC with recommendations. The HCC agreed. Jon Bouton, Angie Emerson and Lee Michaelides volunteered to work with Matt.

- 6. Town Forest Recreation Planning Project:** Angie Emerson reported that the Town Forest Steering Committee received the Draft Vision Framework and Draft Strategies as well as Natural Resource Guidance Toolkit from consultants SE Group and Arrowwood Environmental. Steering Committee meetings have been scheduled for May 9th and June 7th to review the documents. The materials will be used for the July 18th community meeting.
- 7. Town Forest Trails Assessment:** Matt Osborn reported that the Town was awarded a \$500 Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions Tiny Grant to help pay for a trails assessment in the Town Forest. Matt stated that the Town has accepted a proposal from the Upper Valley Trails Alliance to do the trails assessment. The Trails Alliance will be doing the work this spring. Dana Hazen asked if the Trails Alliance will be geo-referencing the locations of areas needing improvement. Matt wasn't sure. He will inquire with the Trails Alliance.
- 8. Town Forest Trail Signs:** Matt Osborn reported that he will order the trail signs in time for the June 2nd Trails Day event.
- 9. Forest Management in the Town Forest:** Dana Hazen reported that he spoke with Teacher Tom Ostler of the Hartford Area Career Technology Center about the Natural Resources Class doing forestry work in the Town Forest. The Class would be able to do pre-harvesting work, but not actual harvesting. Dana also noted that the Class has access to an excavator. Jon Bouton responded that the HCC should inquire about the Class doing water bar work on the Class 4 section of Reservoir Road. Normally, the HCC does repairs with hand shovels.

Tom Kahl asked if the 2009 Forest Management Plan is still relevant. Jon Bouton responded yes. He noted that the Plan is very broad and should be updated at some point. He noted that as recreation continues to grow in the Town Forest, public opinion regarding forest management may shift. He noted the need for the HCC to educate the public about forest management.
- 10. Backwater Trail Downed Trees:** Dana Hazen reported that he will be removing downed trees on the Backwater Trail in the Maanawaka Conservation Area this week.
- 11. Invasive Plants & Insects:** Jon Bouton reported that invasive plants are already up and growing at a fast rate. He noted seeing large sections of garlic mustard.

Dana Hazen volunteered to lead an invasive plant walk in July on his property to demonstrate treatment. The HCC accepted Dana's offer.
- 12. Community Resilience Organization Hartford (CROH):** Matt Osborn reported that CROH formed a working group to plan a series of workshops in the coming months. CROH also formed a working group to work on the update of the Hartford Hazard Mitigation Plan. He noted that the CRO Vermont retreat is this weekend in the Mad River Valley.
- 13. TRORC Regional Plan:** Matt Osborn reported that the Plan formulation is behind schedule. He will inquire about an updated schedule.

14. Hartford Community Coalition Block Party: Jon Bouton reported that the Third Annual Block Party sponsored by the Hartford Community Coalition is scheduled for Wednesday, June 6th at Lyman Point Park. The HCC agreed to have an information table and have literature on ticks, invasive plants and insects as well as HCC brochures and newsletters. The HCC agreed to inquire about recycling at the event.

15. Green-Up Day 2018: Matt Osborn reported that Green-Up Day was a success. The weather was perfect and there was a strong turnout. Matt noted that we had almost 500 volunteers. He noted that the Town Hall dumpster was nearly full and the Quechee Dumpster about ½ full. Matt will be receiving information on quantities later this week. Don MacLeod noted that there are areas that have trash that should be cleaned-up. He suggested that the HCC develop a list of these locations. The HCC agreed. Matt Osborn noted that he was contacted about a large tire dump in town in a steep ravine. He stated that the project is too big and dangerous for volunteers. He contacted the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission about funding for the clean-up. Alan Johnson suggested talking to the Fire Department about using the clean-up as a training exercise.

16. Announcements/Reports:

- a. Vernal Pool Walk: Jon Bouton noted that the vernal pool walk was rescheduled from April 21st to April 28 due to frozen conditions. Conditions greatly improved the following week as 105 spotted salamanders and a rare Jefferson Salamander were collected in the three traps. Photos were sent to Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department and Jim Andrews, Manager of the Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas. They both confirmed the Jefferson. It is the first confirmed sighting of a Jefferson Salamander in Hartford. Jon reported the results of the trapping which is authorized for educational purposes by our permit with VT Fish and Wildlife. The 28th event was attended by 27 people.
- b. Trails Day: Jon Bouton reported that Trails Day is scheduled for Saturday, June 2nd, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in the Town Forest. Jon suggested erecting signs, refreshing trail blazes and general trail maintenance. Matt Osborn will prepare a poster for the event and distribute it.

17. Next Meeting: Jon Bouton noted that the next HCC meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 4th.

18. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:11 p.m.