

Draft Minutes of the
Hartford Conservation Commission
July 6, 2020

Members Present: Jon Bouton, Angie Emerson, Katie Mann, Lee Michaelides and chair Tom Kahl.

Staff Present: Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: None.

A meeting of the Conservation Commission was held at the Hartford Town Hall bandstand at 171 Bridge Street, White River Junction on Monday, July 6, 2020. Tom Kahl called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. **Additions/Changes to the Agenda:** Tom Kahl suggested adding invasive plants in the Town Forest to the agenda. The HCC agreed. He asked if there were any other 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 June 1, 2020. Jon Bouton suggested two changes. There were no other changes. Lee Michaelides made a motion to approve the minutes of June 1, 2020 with the noted changes. Katie Mann seconded the motion. The motion passed 5 to 0.
3. **Green-Up Day Report:** Matt Osborn reported that he thought Green-Up Day was a success particularly given the need to make changes to the normal routine this year due to Covid-19. He noted that a total of 205 volunteers participated in Green-Up Day although the figure is likely much lower than the actual number since there was no in-person registration this year. Normally, we have 350-400 volunteers. Matt reported that 3.48 tons were collected, which was an increase of .34 tons over 2019. Matt thanked Katie Mann for creating the on-line registration form and Tom Kahl for helping him collect materials on three days. He also thanked Angie Emerson, Jon Bouton, Tom and Katie for helping out on Green-Up Day.
4. **Forest Management Plan for Town Forest:** Jon Bouton reported that a virtual meeting on the Draft Forest Management Plan with County Forester A.J. Follensbee is scheduled for Wednesday, July 15th at 7:00 p.m. A planning meeting with A.J., Jon, Tom Kahl and Matt Osborn is scheduled for Wednesday, July 8th. Matt noted that a mailing went out to all Town Forest abutters about the community meeting. As for the structure of the meeting, Tom noted that he will provide an introduction. Jon will then provide a history of forest management in the Town Forest and hand it over to A.J. for a presentation on the Plan. The virtual meeting is intended to be for an hour with the presentation planned to last 45 minutes and the remaining time for questions and comments. Lee Michaelides suggested recording the presentation. Matt agreed to look into it. There was discussion about promotion of the meeting. Matt agreed to do regular List Serv postings, a posting on the Valley News Calendar, posting on the Parks and Recreation Department weekly e-mail blast and distribution of flyers. Jon agreed to coordinate Facebook postings. There was discussion about including a link to the Draft Forest Management Plan and agreement to include everything but the Schedule for Management Activities which is subject to change. Katie volunteered to generate a google public comment document for Matt to post. The comment period will run until August 31, 2020.
5. **Natural Resource Landowner Outreach:** Matt Osborn reported that Katie Mann provided the maps for two of the final three letters to property owners. The letters were mailed out today. Katie ran into a glitch trying to print the maps for the final letter. Once the maps are completed, Matt will mail the remaining letter. It was also agreed to schedule a site visit with a property owner who had responded before the Covid 19 restrictions. Tom Kahl volunteered.

6. Town Forest:

- a. Trails Committee: Matt Osborn reported that Katie Mann developed a google document for the volunteer trails sign-up. Tom Kahl reported that 6 or so volunteers signed up to date.
 - b. VYCC Work Crew: Matt Osborn reported that the VYCC work crew arrived today and will be in the Town Forest a total of ten days over the coming weeks. He stated that a crew of five veteran staff members are doing the work. He noted that he was impressed with some of the switch backs that they created so far. Matt noted that mountain biker Bill Brown also visited the work crew today. Matt stated that he will be making daily visits to the Town Forest during the trails work and will regularly update the HCC via e-mail.
 - c. Town Forest Invasive Plants: Jon Bouton reported that his grandchildren helped him cut and remove a small section of Japanese Knotweed along Reservoir Road.
 - d. Town Forest Recreation Plan: Angie Emerson reported that she met remotely with Tom, Matt and Lori Hirshfield to discuss the Recreation Management Plan and Lori agreed to Angie's suggestion to have the three-page list of Town Forest recreation rules separate from the SE Group Recreation Plan. Regarding e-bikes, a relatively new use, Angie suggested that we should ban them until we can do research to understand the impacts of e-bikes on trails. The HCC agreed. Matt Osborn stated that he has edited the three-page document. The next steps are Matt will provide an introduction and give to Angie. Angie will then assemble with the SE Group Recreation Plan and Toolkit and the work program/goals for the year. The complete document will then be made available for public review and comment, with a community meeting scheduled in September. Katie agreed to develop a google document for public comment.
7. **AVCC Grant Award**: Matt Osborn reported that the HCC was awarded the Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions tiny grant to purchase herbicides to treat invasive plants in the David Chang Conservation Area (DCCA). Dana Hazen had previously indicated that he will begin work on treating invasive plants sometime this month.
8. **David Chang Conservation Area**: Jon Bouton reported that Dana Hazen met with Biologist Bob Popp of the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department to discuss the rare plants on the site and how best to protect them from invasive plants and any herbicides treating the invasive plants.
9. **Stream Restoration Site Visit**: Katie Mann reported that she contacted Greg Russ of the White River Partnership about the site visit. Greg is currently busy and would be available later in the summer. Katie agreed to inquire about scheduling a site visit with Greg in mid to late August.
10. **Bird Outreach**: Matt Osborn reported that Mary Hutchins sent him the links to information on Bobolinks. Matt will have the links posted on the HCC webpage.
11. **HCC Awards Plaque**: Matt Osborn reported that he contacted local sign maker Steve Arkwright about developing a design of a plaque for the HCC Annual Award to go inside the Town Hall. Steve has developed the signage for the interior of the Town Hall. Steve agreed to prepare an estimate for the work. Matt will inquire as to the status of the current town spending freeze. The HCC Award will be presented at the 2021 Hartford Community Coalition Block Party.
12. **Announcements**: There were no announcements.

13. Next Meeting: The HCC agreed to move the August meeting from August 3rd to August 31st. Katie Mann reported that Dana Hazen requested discussing the issue of camping in the Town Forest and Maanawaka Conservation Area at the next meeting. The HCC agreed.

14. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

15. Meeting Action Items:

- a) For the Forest Management Plan community meeting, Matt agreed to do regular List Serv postings, a posting on the Valley News Calendar, a posting on the Parks and Recreation Department weekly e-mail blast and distribution of flyers.
- b) Jon agreed to coordinate Facebook postings for the Forest Management Plan community meeting.
- c) Matt agreed to post the draft Forest Management Plan on the Hartford List Serv and mail it to Town Forest abutters.
- d) Katie agreed to create a google document for public comments on the Forest Management Plan that Matt will publically post.
- e) Katie agreed to work on the maps for the last property owner mailing.
- f) Once the maps are completed for the final property owner mailing, Matt will mail the letter.
- g) Tom volunteered to set up a site visit with one property owner and to make a follow-up phone call to the Vermont Land Trust regarding the natural resource landowner outreach.
- h) Matt agreed to work on a revised introduction to the Draft Recreation Management Plan and send it to Angie.
- i) Once the introduction is complete, Angie will then assemble with the SE Group Recreation Plan and Toolkit and the work program/goals for the year.
- j) It was agreed to make the proposed recreation rules available for public review and comment and schedule a community meeting for September.
- k) Katie agreed to create a google document for Recreation Management Plan.
- l) Dana had previously agreed to begin work on treating invasive plants at the David Chang Conservation Area.
- m) Katie agreed to inquire about scheduling a site visit with Greg Russ of the White River Partnership in mid to late August for the stream restoration project.
- n) Matt agreed to post links to information on Bobolinks on the HCC webpage.