

Draft Minutes of the
Hartford Conservation Commission
October 7, 2019

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: Selectboard Liaison Alan Johnson, Windsor County Forester A.J. Follensbee and Lynx Hill Mann.

A meeting of the Conservation Commission was held at the 171 Bridge Street, White River Junction on Monday, October 7, 2019. Tom Kahl called the meeting to order at 7:00 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 are any corrections to the Draft Minutes of September 9th. Being none, Tom stated that the minutes are approved as written by unanimous consent.
3. **Forest Management in the Hartford Town Forest:** Jon Bouton introduced Windsor County Forester A.J. Follensbee. A.J. was present to talk about forest management in the Town Forest. He noted that one of his responsibilities as a county forester is to assist municipalities with forest management in town forests. He stated that he has spent time in the Hartford Town Forest and has reviewed the Forest Management Plan. He noted that pine trees are in decline and that the Town should do something fairly soon about it. A.J. stated that he is willing to update the Forest Management Plan and do the work preparing for a timber harvest for the winter of 2021. He stated that he intends to review the inventories/reports for the Town Forest and Hurricane Forest Wildlife Refuge. To limit impacts on the Town Forest, A.J. suggested continuing the practice of harvesting in the winter and using a forwarder instead of a skidder. Tom Kahl noted the purpose for forest management in the Town Forest: improve diversity, enhance wildlife habitat, generate some income and provide an educational component.

Mary Hutchins asked what can be done to limit the impact of the tops of trees that are cut, noting that they can be messy. A.J. responded that we can include that in the bid specifications.

A.J. Follensbee noted that the upcoming timber harvesting in the Town Forest could occur in either section C, D or E according to the Forest Management Plan. The Conservation Commission liked the idea of a doing a harvest in a small section and selecting Section E since it would have less impact on recreational trails. Angie Emerson made a motion to work on the update of the Forest Management Plan concurrently with planning for a timber harvest in Section E for the winter of 2021. The motion was seconded by Jon Bouton and approved 7-0. Lee Michaelides stated that we should ensure that it is economically viable. Foresters Jon Bouton and A.J. Follensbee agreed that it will generate some income. Tom Kahl suggested beginning the public education component this winter and spring with some site visits inviting the public. The HCC agreed.

4. **HCC Budget:** Matt Osborn distributed a spreadsheet showing the HCC approved budgets over the last seven fiscal years. He noted that this will be a tight budget year for the Town. Matt stated that the forest management category includes materials for trails maintenance. He noted that the recent bridge constructed as part of Trails Day cost \$500. He suggested increasing that amount since the HCC is planning to do a lot more trails work and will be working with the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps next year and will likely need materials. Jon Bouton suggested increasing it to \$2,000. The HCC

agreed. Matt suggested level funding for the other line items. There was discussion. Lee Michalelides made a motion to approve the HCC budget for fiscal year 2020/2021 to include the following:

• Travel & Training	\$175
• Memberships	\$250
• Advertising	\$180
• Green Up Day Contracted Services	\$2,000
• Educational Materials	\$400
• Forest Management	\$2,000
• <u>Conservation Fund (Reserve Fund)</u>	<u>\$3,000</u>
Total	\$8,055

The motion was seconded by Katie Mann and approved 7 to 0.

5. **Update and Maintaining Wetland Inventory:** Matt Osborn reported that he contacted Pete Fellows of the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission about wetlands mapping. According to Pete, the National Wetlands Inventory and the State wetlands mapping are not very accurate and is not likely to get better anytime soon. If the Town wants better wetlands mapping, Pete suggested hiring a firm like Arrowwood Environmental who can utilize highly detailed LIDAR aerial photography to reveal wetlands. Matt noted that Arrowwood did a vernal pool mapping project in Hartford in 2006 and presented the map. Jon Bouton stated that the improved wetland mapping would be useful for natural resource planning. He noted that wetlands are a very important part of our ecology. Jon also suggested looking at current use mapping which will indicate wetlands identified by the forester. Dana Hazen noted that better wetlands mapping would assist the Conservation Commission with its parcel prioritization work. Angie Emerson suggested bringing someone to a future Conservation Commission meeting to talk about wetlands mapping and the best use of the information. Matt agreed to inquire.
6. **Hartford Potato Fest and Zero Waste:** Matt Osborn reported that Resilient Hartford put on a zero waste event for Potato Fest thanks to the work of volunteer Tim McCosker. There were approximately 75 people attending Potato Fest and the zero waste component went smoothly. Jon Bouton noted that it worked well and agreed that we should do it more often. Matt Osborn stated that the Conservation Commission is interested in producing less waste at the Annual Block Party. Tim McCosker is interested in helping and asked if a Conservation Commission member would be willing to introduce Tim to the Hartford Community Coalition. Jon Bouton and Angie Emerson volunteered. Selectboard Liaison Alan Johnson also volunteered. Matt Osborn agreed to contact Emily Zanleoni to discuss the topic at a Community Coalition meeting.
7. **HCC Stewardship Awards:** Tom Kahl noted that establishing an annual HCC Stewardship Award will recognize landowners for their exemplary work in one of the four categories: land stewards, working landscape, natural resource education and innovation. There was discussion about selecting a recipient for the first award. A selection was made. There was consensus to present the award at the annual Community Coalition Block Party and to inquire about erecting a plaque in the Town Hall. Matt will inquire about having a plaque in the Town Hall.
8. **Natural Resource Letters:** Katie Mann reported that she is working on the letters.
9. **Town Forest Trails Work Outing:** Tom Kahl reported that the September 14th Town Forest trails work outing was very successful. There were over 30 volunteers including many from the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association. Tom thanked Jon Bouton for grilling duties for the volunteer

lunch. The work included two new small bridges on a wet section of the W.B. Brown Trail, a trail re-route on a section of the Moose Brook Trail and two re-routes around two vernal pools. Tom noted the work of Tim Schaal who designed the bridges, developed the materials list and supervised construction. There was discussion about the practice of blowing leaves off the trails. The HCC agreed to continue discussion at the November meeting.

- 10. Possible Land Acquisition:** Jon Bouton presented a natural resource assessment of the property adjacent to the Town Forest that an owner is interested in selling to the Town. There was discussion. Matt Osborn agreed to contact the property owner's representative about the HCC's interest.
- 11. Quechee Lakes Land:** Jon Bouton reported that the owner of the Quechee Lakes Corporation (Taurus Investment Holdings) has listed the 640-acre Section 5C as well as other lands they own. He noted that the 5C property ranks very high for its natural resource qualities. He stated that he has spoken to the Upper Valley Land Trust and the Vermont Land Trust about the property.
- 12. Next Meeting:** Tom Kahl noted that the next HCC meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 4th. Angie Emerson reported that she will be out of town in November.
- 13. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:29 p.m.
- 14. Meeting Action Items:**
 - a) Tom Kahl suggested beginning the public education component this winter and spring with some site visits inviting the public.
 - b) Angie Emerson suggested bringing someone to a future Conservation Commission meeting to talk about wetlands mapping and the best use of the information. Matt Osborn agreed to inquire.
 - c) Matt Osborn agreed to contact Emily Zanleoni to discuss the topic at a Community Coalition meeting. Jon Bouton, Angie Emerson and Alan Johnson volunteered to accompany Tim McCosker at the Hartford Community Coalition meeting to talk about reducing waste at the Block Party.
 - d) Matt Osborn will inquire about having an HCC Awards plaque in the Town Hall.
 - e) The HCC agreed to continue discussion at the November meeting about blowing leaves off the trails.
 - f) Matt Osborn agreed to contact the property owner's representative about the HCC's interest in the property adjacent of the Town Forest.