

Draft Minutes of the
Hartford Conservation Commission
November 7, 2016

Members Present: Dana Hazen, Mary Hutchins, Tom Kahl, Shawn Kelley and chair Jon Bouton.

Staff Present: Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: Connor Chandler, Angela Emerson and Cassidy Neal.

A meeting of the Conservation Commission was held at the Hartford Town Hall, 171 Bridge Street, White River Junction on Monday, November 7, 2016 in Room 312. Chair Jon Bouton called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Jon welcomed Parks and Recreation Commission member Cassidy Neal, Boy Scout Connor Chandler and resident Angela Emerson. Introductions were made.

1. **Town Forest Eagle Scout Project:** Connor Chandler presented photographs of his Eagle Scout Project in the Town Forest. It included repairs to the trailhead kiosk and the Simonds Way Bridge and construction of a box culvert on the Moose Brook Trail. Jon Bouton complimented Connor for doing an excellent job. The Commission agreed. Jon asked Connor about erecting a plaque about the project on the trailhead kiosk. Connor responded that it is a standard practice. Shawn Kelley noted that he hoped more Boy Scouts would take on projects in the Town Forest. Jon thanked Connor for doing the project and for coming to the meeting to discuss it.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Jon Bouton asked if there are any changes to the Draft Minutes of September 12th. Being none, Jon stated that the minutes are approved by unanimous consent as written.
3. **Additions/Changes to the Agenda:** Jon Bouton asked if there are any changes or additions to the agenda. Matt Osborn asked to include an update on the Maanawaka Conservation Area. Jon stated that he would like to add the Lower Hurricane Reservoir and the HCC Budget. The Commission agreed.
4. **Land Management Subcommittee:** Jon Bouton provided background information on the LMS. He noted that the LMS is advisory to the Conservation Commission. He stated that the Committee will meet for the first time in a while on November 17th. A more accurate map was completed. Jon hopes that the Committee can reach consensus on recommendations. He stated that the Committee should address trail standards and long-term maintenance of the trails. Shawn Kelley expressed concern that not all mountain bike trails are included on the map. Jon Bouton responded that these are the trails that the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association provided. Dana Hazen asked the Commission for their thoughts on making the map more usable. It was suggested that the trail names be added as well as Reservoir Road, Wright Reservoir Road, the Town Forest, the Hurricane Forest Wildlife Refuge and the two conservation pools. Matt Osborn noted that there are several management plans that include the Town Forest and the Hurricane Forest Wildlife Refuge. They include the Forest Management Plan, Wildlife Habitat Assessment and Bat Inventory, Bird Habitat Assessment and the Amphibian Inventory. He stated that the Wildlife Biologist and Ornithologist recommended keeping the Hurricane Forest Wildlife Refuge as an old growth forest since most properties in the area have active forest management. As a result, the Forest Management Plan was revised to reflect the recommendation.
5. **Town Forest Kiosk Display:** Matt Osborn reported that with the repaired kiosk, the HCC has an opportunity to update the display. He noted that with the repairs, there is a smaller area for display. He suggested using a smaller map. Dana Hazen suggested providing a map box and providing trail maps to the public once the trails map has been finalized. Jon Bouton suggested creating a Kiosk Sign Committee. Tom Kahl and Mary Hutchins volunteered.
6. **Town Forest Downed Trees:** Jon Bouton reported that there are a number of downed trees in the Town Forest from the July storm that hit the Upper Valley. Mary Hutchins responded that she removed six downed trees on Reservoir Road and the Wright Farm Trail. Jon noted that there are several leaners and uprooted trees that remain. He stated that these are dangerous to remove. He suggested monitoring the trees and ask the public to inform the Town if there are any changes. Shawn Kelley suggested providing a notice at the kiosk.

7. **Lower Hurricane Reservoir:** Matt Osborn reported that Todd Menees left his position with the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources Rivers Program to take a position in another department. Shawn Kelley reported that Scott Jensen replaced Todd. Matt agreed to contact Scott to set up a site visit.
8. **Invasive Plants:** Jon Bouton reported that this time of year is easier to spot many of the invasive plants since their leaves tend to stay on longer than native plants.
9. **Save Dewey's Pond Committee:** Matt Osborn reported that Parks and Recreation Department Tad Nunez requested that the HCC appoint a member to serve as a liaison to the Committee. Matt noted that Janice Berger served as the HCC Liaison, but resigned from the Commission in August. If there are no volunteers, Matt said that he could obtain updates on the Committee from Tad. Jon stated that the HCC should be informed when there are Committee meetings.
10. **Community Resilience Organization Hartford (CROH):** Jon Bouton reported that the CROH will be hosting Resilience Week again next year. He stated that the Committee is seeking a student representative from Hartford High School.
11. **HCC Brochures:** Matt Osborn requested a pdf file of the final bear brochure to post on the Town website. Mary Hutchins agreed. Tom Kahl reported that he provided a brochure rack to the West Hartford Library.
12. **Natural Resources Review:** Jon Bouton reported that Tom Kahl, Matt Osborn and he met with Karen Douville to go over the excel spreadsheet for the natural resource review to get a better understanding of the data and how to use it. Jon stated that he prepared notes from the meeting. The next step is for the HCC to figure out how best to use the data.
13. **HCC Budget:** Jon Bouton reported that the Selectboard will be holding a budget session on Tuesday, November 15th to review the Department of Planning and Development Services budget which includes the HCC budget. Jon noted that Department Director Lori Hirshfield submitted the HCC recommended budget minus the conservation fund request. Jon will attend the budget session and will talk to Lori prior to the 11/15 meeting.
14. **Maanawaka Conservation Area:** Matt Osborn reported that he posted the Maanawaka Conservation Area on Friday. Matt noted that hunting is prohibited on the property. He posts the property once a year. He noted that the Backwater Trail needs some trail maintenance as well as blazing. Matt stated that several trail signs have been vandalized as well. Jon Bouton stated that the signs need to be replaced. Matt will check to see if there are replacement signs. Tom Kahl volunteered to erect the replacement signs.
15. **Announcements/Reports:**
 - a. Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions (AVCC) Annual Conference: Jon Bouton reported that Dana Hazen and he attended the annual AVCC Conference in Fairlee on October 22nd. He stated that it was an excellent conference. Dana agreed noting that he attended sessions on river conservation and changes to water quality standards for agriculture. Jon stated that he particularly enjoyed the keynote address by University of Vermont Professor Walter Poleman. He also attended a session on leadership which he hopes to apply some of the recommendations.
 - b. Recruiting New HCC Members: Jon Bouton noted that the HCC needs to continue to recruit new members for the two vacancies. Shawn Kelley volunteered to post a notice on the Hartford List Serv.
 - c. 2017 HCC Schedule: Matt Osborn presented the Draft 2017 HCC Schedule. He noted that the January 9th meeting conflicts with the Town Warrant Informational Night. The Commission agreed to move the meeting to Tuesday, January 10th. The Commission accepted the meeting schedule.
16. **Next Meeting:** Jon Bouton reported that the next regularly scheduled HCC meeting will be held on Monday, December 5th.
17. **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.