

**Approved Minutes of the
Hartford Conservation Commission
July 11, 2016**

Members Present: Janice Berger, Karen Douville, Dana Hazen, Mary Hutchins, Shawn Kelley and chair Jon Bouton.

Staff Present: Town Manager Leo Pullar and Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: Doug Hahn and Graham Kelley.

A meeting of the Conservation Commission was held at the Hartford Town Hall, 171 Bridge Street, WRJ on Monday, July 11, 2016 in Room 312. Chair Jon Bouton called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. New Town Manager Leo Pullar introduced himself to the Commission. He stated that he appreciates the HCC member's service and noted that he plans to meet individually with all of the Commission chairs. Jon thanked Leo for attending the meeting.

- 1. Approval of Minutes:** Jon Bouton asked if there are any other changes to the Draft Minutes of June 6th. Being none, Jon stated that the minutes are approved by unanimous consent as written.
- 2. Additions/Changes to the Agenda:** Jon Bouton asked if there are any changes or additions to the agenda. There were none.
- 3. Natural Resources Review:** Karen Douville reported that she has been working with Janice Berger on the natural resource review of all Hartford parcels 25 acres and larger using mapping layers and data from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. She noted that it is a web-based program. She stated that Janice and Karen are in the process of compiling the raw data in an excel spreadsheet which the HCC will then decide on how they plan to use it. Karen stated that she has divided the Town into four quadrants. In total, there are over 100 parcels included in the analysis. Jon Bouton stated that the HCC can use the data, evaluate it and rank parcels for conservation purposes. He suggested creating a public process on how the HCC will use the data. Janice suggested that because the HCC is well-informed, they should propose a use for the data and take that to the public. This would be more efficient since the project has already taken a lot of time and is needed. Matt Osborn noted that the Upper Valley Land Trust periodically will ask the Conservation Commission to rank a potential UVLT project.

Doug Hahn commented that the data can be used to develop land use policy and suggested working with the Planning Commission. Matt Osborn noted that the HCC played an important role in using natural resource data in developing the Hartford 2007 Master Plan and 2008 Zoning Regulations that include several natural resource overlay districts.

Karen Douville noted that additional points should be given for lands adjacent to conserved land. Mary Hutchins agreed and noted the recent article in the Valley News regarding efforts to conserve additional land adjacent to already conserved lands in Sharon.

Jon Bouton asked if 25 acres is a good number for evaluation purposes. Karen Douville responded yes. She concluded by noting that more work needs to be done and that discussion

will continue at the August 1st HCC Meeting. Jon Bouton thanked Karen and Janice for the amount of time and effort that they have put into the project. The HCC agreed.

- 4. Wetlands Mitigation, Maxfield Property and Town Forest:** Matt Osborn reported that the Wetlands Mitigation Agreement between the State of Vermont and the Town was accepted by the state and approved by the Hartford Selectboard on June 21st. It was then recorded with the Town Clerk. Karen Douville asked about the wetlands delineation. Jon Bouton responded that although it was not done by a wetlands specialist, it is a good indication of where wetlands exist. Matt Osborn noted that the agreement covers 15 acres in the Town Forest. He also noted that according to the agreement, “at any place where recreational trails may now exist or be established in the future, all crossing of wetland areas shall be bridged in a fashion that will allow crossing of wetland areas with minimal disturbance in the course of construction and maintenance.”

Jon Bouton stated that the HCC needs to inform the Selectboard if there are violations.

Janice Berger asked what the next steps are. The Commission agreed to the following:

1. Inform the Selectboard that some trails may be in violation of the wetlands permit.
2. Overlay the wetlands map with the trails map.
3. Verify the accuracy of the map.
4. Report findings to the Selectboard.

Dana Hazen volunteered to overlay the wetlands map onto the trails map. Matt Osborn stated that he will request the digital files from Tim Rockwood. Dana hopes to complete the mapping in a couple of weeks.

Shawn Kelley stated that the HCC may need to hire a wetlands specialist at some point.

- 5. Land Management Subcommittee:** Jon Bouton reported that once the Town Forest Trails Map has the added wetlands information, the Land Management Subcommittee will reconvene. Jon also noted that Mary Hutchins, Matt Osborn and he have been working on an assessment of the trails in the Town Forest. He stated that all trails should adhere to the standards of the International Mountain Bike Association. The HCC agreed.
- 6. Town Forest Boulders/Water Bar Work:** Matt Osborn reported that he is still trying to schedule a site visit to Reservoir Road with Department of Public Works Director Rich Menge and Highway Superintendent Allyn Ricker. Matt stated that he is hoping that the water bar work is something that DPW can do. Jon Bouton stated that he wasn't sure that DPW has the equipment to do large broad based dips that he would like to see done.
- 7. Invasive Plants:** Karen Douville reported that she has concerns about disposing of invasive plants now that the Vermont Solid Waste Law is prohibiting disposal of plant materials in landfills. Karen is concerned about invasive plants contaminating compost operations. Shawn Kelley volunteered to look into it. Karen reported that she attended a Vermont Beekeeper event and is concerned that the organization is promoting an Asian Bee Tree which is on an

invasive plant watch list. Lastly, Karen noted that Poison Parsnip is flowering. She cautioned to avoid skin contact with the plant.

- 8. Linking Lands Alliance:** Karen Douville reported that the Linking Lands Alliance (LLA) was invited to attend the Fairlee Forest Festival last month. The LLA had an interactive exhibit that was well-received by the educational community. Karen also reported that the LLA is now under the umbrella of the Ottauquechee Natural Resource Conservation District, which will allow them to receive grants.
- 9. Community Resilience Organization Hartford (CROH):** Matt Osborn reported that the CROH Committee has scheduled ten workshops for the Hazard Awareness and Resilience Week August 22-27. Matt noted that the CROH Committee decided to postpone a large community resilience event until next year. The Committee is still considering a smaller community event on August 27th. He stated that there will be a large event in Royalton August 28th commemorating the 5th anniversary of the Irene Flood.
- 10. HCC Brochures:** Mary Hutchins reported that the draft brochure was reviewed and a proof completed. The next step is to get quotes for 1,000 copies. Karen Douville reported that she is now on the Board of Directors of the Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions. She asked the HCC if it is OK to share the pdf files of the HCC Brochures with other Conservation Commissions. The HCC agreed.
- 11. Engaging Vermont Woodland Owners:** Dana Hazen reported that he attended a meeting in Grafton, VT regarding a new project called "Engaging Vermont Woodland Owners through Wildlife." The program is a collaboration of the VT Tree Farm Program, Audubon Vermont, Project Learning Tree, and the American Forest Foundation. He stated that it seems to be very well put together and has already had some success in reaching certain woodland owners. Dana stated that the group is concentrating their efforts in the southern four counties of Vermont and are focusing heavily on bird habitat. He noted that the real positive they have seen to date is success getting people who normally would not do anything with their forestland to become active managing their property to improve wildlife habitat. Dana concluded by stating that this may be a useful tool when approaching private landowners in Hartford to promote conservation and forest management.

12. Announcements/Reports:

- a. Recruiting New HCC Members: Jon Bouton reported that he posted a notice on the Hartford List Serv about the HCC openings. Jon noted that Doug Hahn saw the posting and decided to come to the meeting. Shawn Kelley volunteered to submit another posting on the List Serv in a couple of weeks.
- b. HCC Liaisons: Karen Douville reported that since she is stepping down from the HCC next month, the HCC will need a replacement for her on the Development Review Committee, which meets every five weeks at 4:00 p.m. on Mondays to review new applications that will go to the Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Adjustment. In addition to the HCC, the Tree Board and Energy Commission have a representative. Karen also stated that she has served as the HCC Liaison to the Tree Board and Energy Commission.

13. Next Meeting: Jon Bouton reported that the next regularly scheduled HCC meeting will be held on Monday, August 1st.

14. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.