

**Approved Minutes of the
Hartford Conservation Commission
September 12, 2016**

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

Staff Present: Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: None.

A meeting of the Conservation Commission was held at the Hartford Town Hall, 171 Bridge Street, WRJ on Monday, September 12, 2016 in Room 312. Chair Jon Bouton called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Jon welcomed new member Tom Kahl to the Commission.

- 1. Approval of Minutes:** Jon Bouton noted a correction. He asked if there are any other changes to the Draft Minutes of August 1st. Being none, Jon stated that the minutes are approved by unanimous consent with the noted change.
- 2. Additions/Changes to the Agenda:** Jon Bouton asked if there are any changes or additions to the agenda. There were none.
- 3. Land Management Subcommittee:** Jon Bouton reported that we need to get back to the Land Management Subcommittee with the map and come to a resolution on the trails. He provided background information on the LMS Committee to new member Tom Kahl. He noted that the LMS Committee was established to deal with the unauthorized trails in the Town Forest (created over the last ten years or so) and make recommendations to the HCC who would then present their recommendations to the Selectboard.

Jon noted that former HCC member Karen Douville served on the LMS Committee. He asked if there was a volunteer to replace Karen. Tom Kahl volunteered.

There was discussion regarding some sections of trails that might need to be relocated; one below the Lower Hurricane Reservoir and one section that runs through the southern vernal pool. Jon Bouton noted that trails need to be well laid-out and properly maintained. The HCC agreed.

- 4. HCC Budget:** Matt Osborn distributed a spreadsheet showing the HCC budget for the past several fiscal years. He noted that the HCC funds fall under the Department of Planning and Development Services budget that is developed by Department Director Lori Hirshfield. Each department head develops a budget for their department which then goes to the Town Manager who then presents a consolidated budget to the Selectboard. The Selectboard then hold a series of budget sessions and vote on a budget to present to the Town voters in March. Matt noted that there are two categories for HCC funds. Line items under Conservation in the general fund must be spent by the end of the fiscal year or be returned to the general fund. Items in the conservation fund are treated differently and can be carried over from year to year. Matt noted that for the last several years, the Selectboard has requested that the HCC identify projects and project costs that the HCC anticipates using the conservation fund for in the upcoming fiscal year. The following are the categories for the general fund portion of the budget from the current fiscal year 2016/2017 budget:

HCC General Fund (fiscal year 2016/2017 budget)

• Travel & Training	\$175
• Memberships	\$250
• Contracted Services	\$2,300
• HCC Newsletter	\$600
• Forestry Fund	\$100
• <u>Conservation Fund</u>	<u>\$0</u>
Total	\$3,325

Matt Osborn reported that the Town Manager has directed the department heads to develop budgets with a 3% cut. He noted that given the current fiscal climate, it is unlikely that the conservation fund will be reinstated. There was consensus of the HCC to recommend the same level of funding as the approved budget and reinstate the \$3,000 in the conservation fund.

HCC Proposed General Fund (fiscal year 2017/2018 budget)

• Travel & Training	\$175
• Memberships	\$250
• Contracted Services	\$2,300
• HCC Newsletter/Ed. Materials	\$600
• <u>Conservation Fund *</u>	<u>\$3,000</u>
Total	\$6,325

Matt Osborn noted that Lori Hirshfield requested that the HCC identify their priority for cuts. Shawn Kelley expressed concern that the HCC has had its budget reduced the last three years and wondered if it will ever be returned to pre-FY14/15 levels. Shawn made a motion to cut travel and training then educational materials if absolutely necessary. The motion was seconded by Dana Hazen and approved 4 to 0.

There was discussion regarding the conservation fund line items. Shawn Kelley made a motion maintain the list of projects for the conservation fund and the amount of funding and to add a new category (Trail/Access Road Maintenance) and assign a budget of \$5,000. The motion was seconded by Tom Kahl and approved 4 to 0. The following is the proposed conservation fund budget:

HCC Proposed Conservation Fund (fiscal year 2017/2018 budget)

• Conservation easements (4 @ \$5,000)	\$20,000
• Forestry Services	\$2,500
• Consultant (synthesize plans)	\$2,000
• Recreation Management Plan Update (include GPS)	\$6,000
• Invasive Plant Inventory & Treatment	\$5,000
• Trail/Access Road Maintenance	\$5,000
• Inventories & Mapping	\$2,000
• <u>HCC Brochures</u>	<u>\$1,000</u>
Total	\$43,500

5. **Town Forest Eagle Scout Project:** Matt Osborn reported that he has not heard back from Boy Scouts Connor Chandler or Adam Potter. He did note that Parks and Recreation Department Tad Nunez met with Connor Chandler and provided the standard Boy Scout Eagle Scout project information sheet. Matt noted that he has not received a proposed contract from Connor. Matt agreed to contact him to get a status update.
6. **Natural Resources Review:** Jon Bouton noted that Matt Osborn and he will be meeting 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.
7. **Lower Hurricane Reservoir:** Matt Osborn presented a photograph of the conservation pond. He noted that Todd Menees of the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources Rivers Program agreed to conduct a site visit in the coming weeks. Matt agreed to follow-up with Todd.
8. **Town Forest Boulders/Water Bar Work:** Matt Osborn reported that the Dept. of Public Works did an excellent job on the Reservoir Road water bars and ruts. He also reported that he spoke with Highway Superintendent Allyn Ricker about the need for boulders at the junction of Reservoir Road and the South Side Trail. Matt is hoping that DPW will be able to do that work as well.
9. **Invasive Plants:** Shawn Kelley noted that Poison Parsnip is currently going to seed. Matt Osborn suggested taking a look at invasive plants at the David Chang Conservation Area since it has been several years from the last time the site was monitored. The HCC agreed.
10. **Save Dewey's Pond Committee:** Shawn Kelley reported that there is a large pile of milfoil that was removed from Dewey's Pond last month.
11. **Community Resilience Organization Hartford (CROH):** Jon Bouton reported that the CROH Committee had a successful week of resilience workshops the week of August 22-27 with many folks attending. He added that it may become an annual event. Jon noted that CROH will be conducting an in-house review of the Resilience Week activities.
12. **HCC Brochures:** Jon Bouton reported that we are waiting to hear back from Mary Hutchins regarding the cost estimate for the bear brochure.
13. **Announcements/Reports:**
 - a. Recruiting New HCC Members: Matt Osborn noted that the HCC lost two members and gained one. The Commission is still down two positions. He encouraged continuing to post notices on the Hartford List Serv about the HCC openings and to reach out to folks who might be interested. The Commission agreed.
 - b. Town Forest Downed Trees: Matt Osborn presented photographs of some of the downed trees in the Town Forest from the July 23rd windstorm that hit the Upper Valley. He noted that he will do further reconnaissance of other downed trees so the HCC can develop a plan to remove them.
14. **Next Meeting:** Jon Bouton reported that the next regularly scheduled HCC meeting will be held on Monday, October 1st.
15. **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 8:38 p.m.