

Draft Minutes of the
Hartford Conservation Commission
February 1, 2021

Members Present: Jon Bouton, Mary Hutchins, Dana Hazen, Katie Mann, Lee Michaelides and chair Tom Kahl.

Staff Present: Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: Selectboard Liaison Emma Behrens.

A remote meeting of the Conservation Commission in compliance with the Vermont Open Meeting Law was held on Monday, February 1, 2021. Tom Kahl called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Tom read the Act 92 Open Meeting Law Script.

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 were any changes to the minutes of January 4, 2021 HCC Meeting. There were no changes. Tom stated that the minutes are approved as written by unanimous consent.
3. **2021 Private Landowner Outreach:** Tom Kahl stated that he thinks the landowner outreach has gone well. Jon Bouton agreed. The last letter to ten property owners resulted in site visits with three property owners. Tom asked the Conservation Commission if we should proceed with contacting the third group of ten properties with the highest ranked natural resource ratings. The HCC agreed. Katie Mann suggested including information on the timber harvest. Tom agreed to send a separate letter to the two previous groups of ten property owners. It was also agreed to look at the list of the next ten or so of the highest ranked parcels and discuss at the next meeting which property owners to include in the next mailing. Katie agreed to develop a draft list and circulate it before the next meeting.

4. Town Forest:

- a. Winter 2022 Timber Harvest: Tom Kahl reported that the January 23rd site visit with County Forester A.J. Follensbee and the HCC went very well. A.J. gave the HCC a tour of the areas that he marked for cutting for the winter, 2022 timber harvest as well as the site for the log landing and the patch cut. Tom noted that A.J. sent out a sample contract, bid sheets and revised Timber Sale map. He asked that comments be sent to Matt by Monday, February 8th and Matt will forward to A.J.

Matt Osborn reported that a resident of Reservoir Road requested that for the timber harvest, we look at pine trees that pose a danger to the power lines and include them in the timber harvest. Jon Bouton volunteered to contact the property owner to find out about the specific trees and then discuss the potential of removing these trees in the timber harvest with A.J.

Tom Kahl stated that Cover Home Repair uses rough cut hemlock for ramp installations. He suggested harvesting some hemlock during the 2022 timber harvest and donating it to Cover. The HCC agreed to pursue. Tom will contact Cover to inquire about the quantity of wood they might need.

Mary Hutchins confirmed that Richard Wright has agreed to give a public demonstration of sawing at the Wright Sawmill as a public education component of the timber harvest. The intent is that it

would be in the spring of 2022 after the HTF timber, and be on a Saturday morning for an hour or two

Lee Michaelides suggested using hemlock for Town Forest bridges instead of pressure treated lumber. The HCC agreed.

Jon Bouton reported that he has been speaking to a Hartford resident who is opposed to any timber harvesting on public land. He stated that the HCC might have to deal with that perspective the closer we get to the timber harvest. It was agreed that the HCC needs to be transparent and to look at the research. Jon agreed to forward the HCC links to timber harvest literature.

- b. Hartford Area Career Technology Center Natural Resources Class: Tom Kahl reported that A.J. is willing to work with Tom Ostler's Natural Resources class and Tom heard back from HACTC Administrator Doug Heavisides and teacher Tom Osler. Tom Osler said that he will be contacting AJ to arrange for AJ's participation.
 - c. 2021 Trail Maintenance: Tom Kahl reported that the Trails Committee (Katie, Tom and Matt) put together a trail maintenance plan for 2021 which will include a work-day in May and another in September as well as a virtual sign-up. Tom will send the plan to the entire HCC.
 - d. Wayfinding Signs. Matt Osborn reported that he conducted a site visit at the five locations for the wayfinding signs and noted that there are some challenges for mounting the wayfinding signs on existing street signs. Matt will discuss the challenges and options with the Department of Public Works.
 - e. Trails Map: Tom Kahl reported that Dana Hazen completed revisions to the Town Forest trails map and printed a large copy. Matt Osborn agreed to pick up the map and deliver it to Tom who will post it in the Town Forest Kiosk. Matt also will post the revised trails map on the Town website.
 - f. Hartford High School Outreach: Jon Bouton agreed to contact teacher Mary Bouchard to discuss potential HTF student projects such as establishing a pollinator garden or interpretive signage.
 - g. Recreation Management Plan: Tom Kahl noted that Angie Emerson was unable to attend the meeting. He asked about next steps. Matt Osborn suggesting waiting to present the RMP to the Selectboard until after Town Meeting. The HCC agreed.
 - h. Possible Conservation Easement: Tom Kahl noted that the HCC has discussed placing a conservation easement on the Town Forest and inviting a representative from the Upper Valley Land Trust to attend a future HCC meeting to discuss it. Lee Michaelides asked if there are any restrictions on developing the Town Forest. Matt Osborn responded that the Act 250 permit for the Maxfield Athletic Fields placed restrictions on wetlands in the Town Forest, but as long as the wetlands are protected, development could occur elsewhere. There was discussion. It was agreed to review information on conservation easements and develop questions for the UVLT to address at a future meeting. Matt Osborn volunteered to provide information on conservation easements. Dana Hazen suggested providing information on the Maanawaka Conservation Area conservation easement. Matt agreed to provide that information as well.
- 5. Climate Action Plan Report:** Mary Hutchins reported that the consultant for the Climate Action Plan (CAP) is busy working on the CAP. She noted that the kick-off meeting was held on January 13th. She noted that six working groups covering eight major topics have been formed and a series of

workshops will be taking place over the next several months culminating in a Climate Action Plan this summer.

6. Indigenous Peoples Partnership: Katie Mann stated that she will continue to seek a partnership with an indigenous organization to work with the Conservation Commission on educational projects.

7. Announcements:

a. Selectboard Liaison Emma Behrens: Emma Behrens announced that this will be her last meeting as Selectboard Liaison to the HCC since she decided not to seek re-election. She stated that she has enjoyed participating in the HCC meetings over the past several months and is impressed with the work that we do.

8. Next Meeting: Tom Kahl reported that the next HCC meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 1st at 7:00 p.m.

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

10. Meeting Action Items:

- a) It was also agreed to look at the list of the next (third) ten or so of the highest ranked natural resource parcels and discuss at the next meeting which property owners to include in the next mailing. Katie will develop a draft list of the next property owners and circulate to the HCC before the next meeting.
- b) Tom agreed to send a separate letter to the two previous groups of ten property owners about the 2022 timber harvest.
- c) Matt asked that comments on the sample contract, bid sheets and revised Timber Sale map be sent to him by Monday, February 8th and he will forward to A.J.
- d) Jon volunteered to contact the property owner to find out about the specific trees she asked to be cut and then discuss with A.J.
- e) Tom will contact Cover to begin the discussion on the quantity of wood that they might need.
- f) Jon to send out information to the HCC on timber harvesting.
- g) Matt will continue to work with the Department of Public Works to install wayfinding signs directing people to the Town Forest.
- h) Matt agreed to pick up the trails map and deliver it to Tom who will post it in the Town Forest Kiosk.
- i) Matt will post the revised trails map on the Town website.
- j) Matt volunteered to provide information on conservation easements.
- k) Matt agreed to provide that information on the Maanawaka Conservation Area conservation easement.
- l) Jon agreed to contact teacher Mary Bouchard about possible student projects in the Town Forest.
- m) Katie volunteered to contact an indigenous organization about a partnership for educational purposes.