

**Draft Minutes of the**  
Hartford Conservation Commission  
March 2, 2020

**Members Present:** Jon Bouton, Angie Emerson, Mary Hutchins, Katie Mann, Lee Michaelides and chair Tom Kahl.

**Staff Present:** Planner Matt Osborn.

**Others Present:** Selectboard Liaison Alan Johnson.

A meeting of the Conservation Commission was held at the Hartford Town Hall located at 171 Bridge Street, White River Jct. on Monday, March 2, 2020. 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. Tom suggested Natural Resource Letters, Coffee with Committees and the HCC Snowshoe. The HCC agreed.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Tom Kahl noted a correction to the Draft Minutes of February 6<sup>th</sup>. He asked if there were any other corrections. Being none, Tom stated that the minutes are approved with the noted correction by unanimous consent.
3. **Green-Up Day Projects:** Matt Osborn noted that Green-Up Day is Saturday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>. He asked that the HCC think of projects for Green-Up Day. He noted that the Lions Club has volunteered a crew of 10-15 volunteers for two hours on Green-Up Day. They are requesting a project. One suggestion is the steep slope adjacent to the Hartford Cemetery on Maple Street that has a dumping site for items left in the cemetery. Tom Kahl volunteered to scope it out. The HCC also agreed to visit the ravine next to the Advent Camp before the May 4<sup>th</sup> HCC Meeting.
4. **Natural Resource Landowner Outreach:** Tom Kahl was pleased to report that we received responses from two property owners in regards to the letters that were sent out last month. Tom Kahl and Jon Bouton will be meeting with one of them on March 9<sup>th</sup>. Katie Mann reported that there have been technical issues with Biofinder that has prevented her from printing out maps for the remaining property owners of the second group of priority conservation parcels. She has requested to the VANR that BioFinder be corrected. Once corrected, Katie will print out the maps.
5. **Town Forest Recreational Plan:** Tom Kahl reported that Angie Emerson has been working on an update to the 2002 Recreation Management Plan that will be incorporated into the Draft 2018 Recreation Management Plan that was developed by consultant SE Group. Angie utilized the format of the 2002 Plan and developed a three-page draft which focuses on guidelines, rules, goals and strategies. There was discussion about the difference between the two plans. Angie Emerson noted that the SE Group Plan is more philosophical and operational than the 2002 Plan. Lee Michaelides agreed stating that the SE Group Plan is more of a policy document. It also was noted that the SE Group had an extensive public outreach process that included a Steering Committee, several community meetings and a community survey. Chair Tom Kahl noted that it appears that we need more time to iron out the update and asked if scheduling a workshop on the Recreation Management Plan would help. The Commission agreed and decided to schedule a workshop on Monday, March 30<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. Matt Osborn agreed to schedule a meeting room.
6. **Town Forest:**
  - a. **Forest Management:** Lee Michaelides reported that he finalized the forest management plan update write-up. Tom Kahl reported that County Forester A.J. Follensbee completed a Draft Forest

Management Plan on February 28<sup>th</sup>. A.J. will attend the 4/6 HCC Meeting to talk about it. Matt Osborn reported that he will request that the item be scheduled for the March 24<sup>th</sup> Selectboard meeting. Jon Bouton and Matt will work on the presentation, and Katie Mann said that she could also attend the Selectboard meeting.

- b. Game of Logging: Jon Bouton reported that everything is set for the Game of Logging (a chainsaw education class) scheduled for May 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Town Forest sponsored by the Hartford Area Career Technology Center. Jon will be marking and coordinating with the HACTC which 12 to 15 trees can be cut.
  - c. Trails Committee: Tom Kahl reported that the Trails Committee will be meeting in April to finalize details for the May 9<sup>th</sup> trail work-day.
  - d. Trails Grant Application: Matt Osborn reported that he submitted a draft grant application to the Upper Valley Mountain Bike (UVMBA) on February 4<sup>th</sup>. The UVMBA submitted the application to the Vermont Mountain Bike Association on the Town's behalf. Matt expects to hear whether the grant is awarded or not in the coming weeks.
  - e. Snowshoe Outing: Jon Bouton reported that the annual snowshoe at the Town Forest on February 16<sup>th</sup> was a success. Jon noted that County Forester A.J. Follensbee attended and there was a good turnout.
  - f. Snowmobile Use in the Town Forest: Jon Bouton reported that he has noticed that snowmobiles have used the Moose Brook Trail and the W. B. Brown Trail this winter. He asked Mary Hutchins if the Hurricane Riders use these trails. She responded no. It was noted that the bridge modifications on the Moose Brook Trail Bridge (to support snow mobiles several years ago) needs to be repaired. Mary noted that the VAST Trail follows the Class 4 section of Reservoir Road and turns into the Town Forest along the northwest boundary heading toward Bliss Road. She also noted that there is a snowmobile spur trail that runs from Reservoir Road to the Wright property. It was agreed to place no snowmobiling signs on the Moose Brook and W.B. Brown trails, and Mary said that the VAST would supply these signs.
  - g. VYCC Work Crew: Matt Osborn reported that services agreement from the VYCC is being reviewed by the Town Attorney. Tom Kahl noted that the VYCC will visit the Town Forest in April to flag the Pine Drop relocation and that the final relocation route will be approved by the HCC with collaborative input from the VYCC and the mountain bike community.
7. **Bird Outreach**: Mary Hutchins reported that she contacted the Vermont Center for Ecostudies and that due to the departure of a key staff person, the program to reach out to property owners of grasslands to improve bird habitat has been scaled back. She noted that handouts for property owners are available and that the HCC could distribute these to interested property owners. Mary said that she will review the handouts and at the April HCC meeting recommend which ones to distribute.
8. **Quechee Lakes Land**: Tom Kahl reported that he prepared and distributed to the HCC on February 18<sup>th</sup> a draft description of the natural resource value of the Quechee Lakes Corporation (Taurus Investment Holdings) 640-acre property that is for sale. Tom will incorporate any HCC and staff comments and send the letter to Bob Linck of the Vermont Land Trust.
9. **AVCC Tiny Grant**: Matt Osborn reported that the Annual Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions Tiny Grant is due April 10<sup>th</sup> and offers \$200-\$600 grants to Conservation Commission in Vermont. He noted that the HCC received an AVCC grant two years ago to help pay for the Town Forest Trails Assessment. It was agreed to consider a grant for invasive plant control at the David

Chang Conservation Area. Tom Kahl agreed to talk with Dana Hazan and see if he thinks it would be useful to pursue a grant for this effort.

- 10. HCC Town Meeting Informational Table:** Jon Bouton reported that Angie Emerson, Lee Michaelides, and he staffed the HCC table at the Coffee with Committees event prior to the Town Meeting on February 29<sup>th</sup>. He noted that he borrowed two Linking Lands Alliance habitat maps for the event. Jon stated that although it was a small turnout, he thinks it is beneficial for the HCC to have a presence at the event.
- 11. Linking Lands Alliance Maps:** Jon Bouton noted that the HCC should order the two habitat maps he borrowed for the Coffee with Committees event. He stated that the maps will be useful to have for the Conservation Commission and the Planning Commission. The HCC agreed. Matt Osborn agreed to order the maps.
- 12. Passing Land Pop-Up Session:** Tom Kahl reported that a Coverts Passing Land Pop-Up Session is scheduled for Brattleboro on March 10<sup>th</sup>. Tom noted that he passed the information on it to the three local residents who expressed interest in the Pop-up Session.
- 13. Block Party Recycling:** Angie Emerson reported that the Hartford Community Coalition and the Rotary Club are on-board to make this year's Block Party a "no waste event" and that she and Jon Bouton will be meeting with the Coalition to follow up.
- 14. Wetland Inventory:** Matt Osborn reported that he heard from State Wetlands Biologist Rebecca Chalmers that there is a possibility that the State of Vermont could provide updated wetlands mapping for Hartford. The State will notify the Town as early as the end of May.
- 15. HCC Awards Plaque:** Matt Osborn reported that Town Manager Brannon Godfrey approved the Conservation Commission's request to install a plaque for an annual Conservation Commission award in the Town Hall. Matt stated that he will work on developing a design with a local sign maker and seek approval of the design and specific location for the plaque. Lee Michaelides will work on a draft public description of the award.
- 16. Next Meeting:** Tom Kahl noted that the next HCC meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 6<sup>th</sup>.
- 17. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.
- 18. Meeting Action Items:**
  - a) The HCC agreed to visit the ravine next to the Advent Camp before the May 4<sup>th</sup> HCC Meeting to evaluate the dumped refuse.
  - b) Once the BioFinder technical issues are corrected, Katie Mann will print out the maps for the remaining natural resource letters.
  - c) Tom Kahl and Jon Bouton will be meeting on March 9 with one landowner who has responded to a recent natural resource letter.
  - d) The Commission agreed and decided to schedule a workshop on Monday, March 30<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. to review the Recreation Management Plan. Matt Osborn agreed to schedule a meeting room.
  - e) Matt Osborn agreed to request getting on a Selectboard Meeting agenda in March to discuss forest management. Jon Bouton and Matt will work on the presentation.
  - f) The HCC will coordinate with VYCC and mountain bikers regarding the re-route options for Pine Drop Trail.

- g) Jon Bouton volunteered to coordinate the Game of Logging Level Two in the Hartford Town Forest and that he will mark the 12-15 trees in the Town Forest to be cut for the Game of Logging.
- h) It was agreed to place VAST supplied no snowmobiling signs on the Moose Brook and W.B. Brown trails.
- i) Mary Hutchins will review the handouts and at the April HCC meeting recommend which ones to distribute.
- j) Tom Kahl will revise to HCC and Hartford staff comments on the the draft description of the natural resource value of the Quechee Lakes 5C parcel to Hartford and send to the Vermont Land Trust.
- k) Tom Kahl agreed to follow-up with Dana Hazan on a possible AVCC grant project to assist in invasive plant control at the David Chang Conservation Area.
- l) Matt Osborn agreed to order habitat maps available through the Linking Lands Alliance.
- m) Matt Osborn stated that he will work on developing a HCC Conservation Award plaque design with a local sign maker and seek approval of the design and specific location for the plaque.
- n) Lee Michaelides will work on a draft public description of the HCC Conservation award.