

Approved Minutes of the
Hartford Conservation Commission
January 9, 2023

Members Present & Date their Term is Up: Jon Bouton (9/7/24), Angie Emerson (1/11/25), Mary Hutchins (11/4/23), Ted Levin (11/15/25), Katie Mann (2/26/23), Lee Michaelides (10/29/26) and chair Tom Kahl (8/24/24).

Staff Present: Town Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: Selectboard Liaison Mary Erdei.

A hybrid Hartford Conservation Commission (HCC) Meeting in compliance of the Open Meeting Law was held on Monday, January 9th in Room 2 of the Hartford Town Hall located at 171 Bridge Street, White River Junction. Chair Tom Kahl called the meeting to order at 7:11 p.m. and proceeded to read the Hybrid Meeting Script followed by roll call.

1. **Changes to the Agenda:** Tom asked if there are any changes to the agenda. There were none.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Tom asked if there are any changes to the draft minutes of 12/5/22. There were none. Tom stated that the HCC minutes of 12/5/22 are approved as written by unanimous consent.
3. **Climate Action Plan:** Lee Michaelides reported that the Tree Board and Conservation Commission (Angie & Lee) have been working on a plan to treat invasive plants and plant Cottonwood trees at Lyman Point Park. The Tree Board applied for a tree grant for the project. Ted suggested that consideration be given to Box Elders, Silver Maple or Black Willow. Lee noted that the project will include educational signs. Angie agreed to email a copy of the grant application to the HCC.
4. **Town Forest Timber Harvest Update:** Tom reported that Long View is near completion of the south half of the timber harvest (south of the stream) but had to shut down operations last week due to the mild weather and softening ground conditions. The weather forecast is for colder weather this week before warming up again the end of the week. Matt noted that prior to the warmup, many harvested logs were hauled to both log landings and some logs were hauled to the sawmill.

Ted Levin asked what concerns neighbors had about the timber harvest. Matt responded that he has spoken with most of the neighbors and that many said they moved to Reservoir Road since it is a quiet rural area. They have expressed concern about noise and traffic as well as the aesthetic impact of cutting trees. Tom added that one neighbor expressed concern about dogs on Reservoir Road being off leash in violation of the Town leash law. Matt noted that the Town Forest Management Plan allows dogs off leash which may be in conflict with the Town leash law. Tom asked if Matt could research this. Matt agreed. Tom noted that one neighbor requested a traffic count since he believes traffic has increased on Reservoir Road in the past few years due to the increase in Town Forest recreational use. There was consensus that a trail counter would be more valuable.

5. **Town Forest Timber Harvest Public Outreach:** Tom reported that there was a very good turnout (over 20 people) at the 1/7 tour with County Forester A.J. Follensbee and Long View Forester Mike King. He noted that the Valley News ran a story on it in the Sunday 1/8 issue. Tom asked the HCC about sponsoring a sawmill demonstration at Wright's Sawmill as part of the public outreach which we have previously discussed. Jon responded yes but only if the Wright's take the lead. Mary Hutchins agreed to talk to Richard Wright. Matt suggested that as an alternative to inviting the public to the sawmill for the demonstration, we could ask A.J. Follensbee to take a video of the sawmill

demonstration and post it on the town website with A.J.'s other videos on forest management. The HCC agreed to the video if the live demonstration doesn't work out.

Tom also noted that at some point we will have to decide on whether to keep the Moose Brook Trail alignment or use the new skid trail instead.

6. **Trailforks:** Katie Mann reported that Anna Schaal will be the Town Forest trail manager for Trailforks on behalf of the HCC. Anna will post on Trailforks the trails that are closed for the duration of the timber harvest.
7. **Hemlock Memorandum of Understanding:** Matt reported that after Covered reviewed the number of ramps that they currently install in Hartford in a year (an average of one), they decided not to accept the hemlock. Other issues included that Cover lacks storage space and their construction leader expressed concern about using aged hemlock. He prefers using freshly cut hemlock. Matt noted that Cover was very grateful with the Town's offer.
8. **Trail Map/Signs:** Tom noted that there is nothing new to report on at this time.
9. **Hunting Safety Vests:** Matt reported that he obtained seven safety vests for the Town Forest and three safety vests for the Maanawaka Conservation Area and placed them there in early November. He collected them on Saturday and all three were returned at the Maanawaka Conservation Area and four vests were returned to the Town Forest resulting in a net loss of three vests. He noted that the cost of the ten vests was \$45. He plans to deliver the vests to both locations next fall. The HCC agreed that this is a good idea.
10. **Forest Interpretive Signs:** Jon reported that this is an important part of the educational component for forest management and that he is working on it.
11. **HACTC T-shirt Fund Donation:** Matt reported that he inquired about the donation and is waiting to hear back from the Finance Department on how it should be handled. Matt agreed to follow-up.
12. **Private Landowner Conservation Outreach:** Matt reported that he is planning on doing the mailing this month.
13. **David Chang Conservation Area Boundary Markers:** The HCC decided not to pursue boundary markers for the David Chang Conservation Area at this time.
14. **Kestrel Boxes:** Ted reported that he received reimbursement from the Town for the two kestrel boxes. The boxes will be installed at Sunrise Farm in March. Ted also noted that the Kestrel box located near Kings Highway will be moved to a more open location.
15. **Winter Education Events:** Tom noted that Ted will lead a natural history walk in the Town Forest this Saturday, January 14th at 10:00 a.m.
16. **HCC Website and Posting of the Integrated Town Forest Plan:** Matt reported that there are additional changes that will occur with the Town website that will need to be made prior to the HCC making changes to their web page. In the meantime, Matt will have the Integrated Town Forest Plan posted on the website.
17. **Vermont Invasive Management Day:** Tom noted that the HCC received an email request from Bernie Paquette of Jericho, Vermont requesting a letter of support for his effort to ask the State

Legislature to declare a Vermont Invasive Management Day. Ted volunteered to look into. Matt agreed to forward the email to Ted.

18. Announcements:

- a. Valley News Article on Fungi and Timber Harvesting: Jon reported that there was an excellent article in the Sunday 1/8 issue of the Valley News article on Fungi and Timber Harvest that he recommends reading.
- b. HCC Conservation Award: Tom noted that the HCC had initiated a conservation awards program with a plaque to be installed in the Town Hall but with Covid it didn't happen. He asked the HCC if they wanted to pursue it and present the award at the annual Hartford Community Coalition Block Party. The HCC agreed. Matt will work on it.

19. Next Meeting: Tom reported that the next HCC meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 6th at 7:00 p.m.

20. Upcoming Events:

- a. Town Forest Natural History Walk: Saturday, January 14th at 10:00 a.m. Matt reported that he prepared a flyer, posted it on the Town website, List Serv and the Parks and Recreation Department Constant Contact email. He also distributed the flyer to the libraries, Bugbee Senior Center and the Quechee Lakes Landowners Association. Ted agreed to post it on the Upper Valley List Serv as well. Matt agreed to send Ted the description.

21. Adjournment: Angie made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Ted and approved. The meeting was adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

22. Meeting Action Items:

- a. Ted suggested that consideration be given to Box Elders, Silver Maple or Black Willow for the Lyman Point Park riverbank along the White River.
- b. Angie agreed to email a copy of the Tree Board's grant application to the HCC.
- c. Tom asked if Matt could research the Town leash law and whether there is a conflict with allowing unleashed dogs in the Town Forest. Matt agreed.
- d. Mary Hutchins agreed to talk to Richard Wright about the sawmill demonstration.
- e. Tom noted that at some point the Hartford Town Forest Trails working group will have to decide on whether to continue to use the Moose Brook Trail or use the new skid trail instead.
- f. Anna Schaal will post on Trails Fork the Town Forest trails that are closed for the duration of the timber harvest.
- g. Matt will inquire about providing the Hartford Area Career Technology Center with \$100 to go to their t-shirt fund for the work they completed in the Town Forest.
- h. Matt will deliver the safety vests to the Town Forest and Maanawaka Conservation Area next fall.
- i. Matt agreed to have the Integrated Town Forest Management Plan posted on the website.
- j. Matt agreed to send out the natural resource letters.
- k. Ted will install the Kestrel boxes at Sunrise Farm in March as well as moving the existing Kestrel box located in a meadow off Kings Highway.
- l. Ted will lead a natural history walk in the Town Forest on January 14th.
- m. Ted agreed to post information on the natural history walk on the Upper Valley List Serv.
- n. Lee and Katie volunteered to serve on a subcommittee to update the HCC webpage once the Town website update is completed.

- o. Matt agreed to forward the email from Bernie Paquette of Jericho requesting a letter of support for Bernie's effort to ask the State Legislature to declare a Vermont Invasive Management Day to Ted.
- p. Ted volunteered to look at the request for a letter of support for the State Legislature to declare a Vermont Invasive Management Day and email the HCC.
- q. Matt will work on obtaining a Conservation Commission Awards plaque.