

Approved Minutes of the
Hartford Conservation Commission
April 3, 2023

Members Present & Date their Term is Up: Jon Bouton (9/7/24), Mary Hutchins (11/4/23), Ted Levin (11/15/25), Katie Mann (3/20/27), Lee Michaelides (10/31/26) 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, April 3rd 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 7:00 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 3/6/23. There were none. Tom stated that the HCC minutes of 3/6/23 are approved as written by unanimous consent.
3. **Public Comments:** Tom asked if there are any public comments. There were none.
4. **Wilder School Project:** Tom reported that he happened to meet Carolyn Hooper and they talked about the food forest at the Wilder School. Carolyn noted that things are moving forward and they are working on a plan. Lee Michaelides added that although it wasn't expected to start until 2024, it is possible to start later this year.
5. **Town Forest Timber Harvest Update:** Matt Osborn went over the gross receipts and expenses for the timber harvest to date. Gross receipts were \$13,929. Gravel expenses were \$1,835. Matt noted that the Hartford Area Career & Technology Center (HAC&TC) did not charge the Town for the work on the parking area and south log landing. He also noted that since the Hartford Department of Public Works delivered the gravel and the HAC&TC did work, it saved the Town a considerable amount of money leading to higher revenues than anticipated. Matt requested that Long View Forest provide us with anticipated costs for reclaiming the north and south log landings. Long View provided an estimate of \$1,057.50. With the additional work needed by Long View for the log landings, the net income from the timber harvest will be approximately \$11,036. Tom asked where the revenue was deposited. Matt responded in the Town conservation fund.

Tom reported that he coincidentally saw Bill Brown and A.J. Follensbee at the Town Forest. Bill and Tom visited some of the trails impacted by the timber harvest. Tom suggested a Conservation Commission outing to work on clean-up and reach out to others to help. Tom said a few trails could be easily cleaned up and opened. The HCC agreed to schedule a workday in late April.

Tom also reported that A.J. will be meeting with Long View in late April to talk about the clean-up. Tom will reach out to Anna Schaal to get UVMBA input before A.J.'s meeting.

Tom also noted that we will have to make a decision about whether to reroute Moose Brook Trail or not. Tom agreed to contact Anna Schall about obtaining input from the mountain bike community. Matt added that if we reroute the Moose Brook Trail, there will be added costs for the work.

6. **Timber Harvest Public Outreach:** Tom asked Mary Hutchins if Richard Wright would be able to do the sawmill demonstration sometime this spring. Mary responded that Richard is having hip

replacement surgery and will need recovery time. Mary suggested discussing at the May 1st HCC Meeting. The HCC agreed.

7. **Trail Forks:** Katie reported that Anna Schaal had posted the trails in the timber harvest area closed in the Trail Forks app. She also volunteered to post a notice and link in the [Hartford Town Forest MTB Facebook page](#) to Trail Forks and the closed trails.
8. **Trails Map:** Katie reported that she added a note on the trail map directing people to Trail Forks for the most recent trails information. She asked if the trails should be closed to mountain biking during the month of April since it is wet and will lead to trail damage. The HCC agreed. Katie will discuss with Anna Schaal. Lee noted that the Boston Lot Trails are currently closed. It was agreed to post signs in a few spots in the Town Forest asking folks to stay off trails if they are muddy. Tom volunteered to make and post the signs.
9. **HACTC T-Shirt Fund Donation:** Matt reported that he has discussed this with the Department of Planning and Development Director Lori Hirshfield and HACTC teacher Matt Dragon. They are still working to find a solution. Katie suggested that HACTC submit an invoice for services. The HCC agreed. Katie made a motion to provide HACTC \$250 for their work in the Town Forest. The motion was seconded by Lee Michaelides and approved 6 to 0. Matt will follow-up.
10. **Town Forest Kiosk Sign Replacement:** Mary will get a price quote for a 36” x 12” vinyl sign from a sign company in Barre that she uses for snow machine signs.
11. **Trails Day 2023:** Matt asked about possible projects for Trails Day for the annual event. Tom suggested constructing a bridge on the Three Bridges Trail. He will discuss with Anna Schaal. Matt suggested looking at the 2018 Trails Assessment. Katie thinks there is plenty of general trail maintenance work to do. The HCC agreed.
12. **Tree Plantings in the Town Forest:** Jon Bouton reported that he is in contact with the American Chestnut Tree Foundation (ACTF) about planting blight resistant Chestnut Trees in the Town Forest. There is an ACTF representative in Bethel who is willing to come to the Town Forest. Jon agreed to pursue. Jon also suggested planting White Oaks in the Town Forest as a way of making the Town Forest more resilient to climate change. The HCC agreed.
13. **HCC Conservation Award/Plaque:** Matt reported that he spoke to Department of Planning and Development Director Lori Hirshfield about the HCC award program. Lori requested a write-up of the proposal. Lee Michaelides volunteered to prepare a draft and circulate to the HCC before the next meeting.
14. **Block Party Recycling:** Matt reported that the Hartford Community Coalition will be hosting the annual Block Party at Lyman Point Park on Wednesday, June 21st and asked the Conservation Commission for assistance with event recycling. Tom volunteered to be the HCC’s representative to the Community Coalition.
15. **Book “Our Better Nature”:** Matt reported that he heard back from three libraries and four schools who requested a copy of the book “Our Better Nature: Hopeful Excursions in Saving Biodiversity”. Ted asked if the Mid Vermont Christian School was contacted. Matt responded that he only contacted public schools. The HCC agreed that the Mid Vermont Christian School and Upper Valley Waldorf School should be contacted as well. Matt agreed to contact both schools.

16. HCC Election of Officers: Tom noted that it is the time of year where HCC elects officers. The HCC came up with the follow slate:

Chair: Tom Kahl
Vice-Chair: Katie Mann
Treasurer: Jon Bouton

Mary made a motion to elect the proposed slate of officers. The motion was seconded by Jon Bouton and unanimously approved.

17. HCC Opening: Katie reported that she has posted the vacancy on the Hartford List Serv. Tom thanked Katie. Matt reported that he was contacted by an interested resident. Jon said that he would try to forward a previous vacancy advertisement to Katie for her reference.

18. Private Landowner Conservation Outreach: Katie volunteered to draft a brief follow-up letter to all property owners sent letters in the past.

19. Vernal Pool Walk: Katie mentioned that Kevin Tolan from Vermont Center for Ecostudies will lead the April 29th Vernal Pool Walk and Ben Lay (Fletcher) from the Hartford Salamander Team will participate. Katie will attend to represent the HCC. Tom thanked Katie for organizing this event. Jon mentioned that he has a permit and minnow traps that can be used to trap and then during the event release salamanders.

20. Announcements:

- a. Invasive Plant Workshop: Hosted by VINS on Sunday, April 16th.
- b. On-line Forest Pests Workshop: Hosted by the Vermont Urban and Community Forestry Program 4/10 – 5/14.

21. Upcoming Events: Tom reported on the following events:

- a. Vernal Pool Walk: Saturday, April 29th.
- b. Green-Up Day: Saturday, May 6th. Ted will help Matt with collections on May 3 and 5th.
- c. Bird Walk Town Forest: Saturday, May 20th.

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

23. Adjournment: Tom stated that the meeting was adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

24. Meeting Action Items:

- a. Katie volunteered to post a HTF closed trail notice and Trail Forks link on the [Hartford Town Forest MTB Facebook page](#).
- b. Katie volunteered to contact Anna Schaal about closing trails to mountain biking for the month of April.
- c. The HCC agreed to schedule a workday in late April to clean-up trails affected by the timber harvest.
- d. Tom will reach out to Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association officer Anna Schaal about trail clean-up in areas affected by the timber harvest.

- e. Tom agreed to contact Anna Schall about obtaining input from the mountain bike community about rerouting the Moose Brook Trail.
- f. Tom volunteered to make and post signs for the Town Forest asking folks to stay off trails if they are muddy.
- g. Katie volunteered to draft the letter to the property owners who were sent natural resource letters over the past few years.
- h. Matt will inquire about providing the Hartford Area Career & Technology Center with \$250 for the work they completed in the Town Forest.
- i. Mary will get a price quote for the Town Forest Kiosk sign.
- j. Tom agreed to talk to Anna Schaal about Trails Day.
- k. Jon will work with the American Chestnut Tree Foundation representative about planting blight resistant Chestnut Trees in the Town Forest.
- l. Jon will look into planting White Oak trees in the Town Forest as a way of making the Town Forest more resilient to climate change.
- m. Lee volunteered to prepare and circulate a draft proposal for the HCC Conservation Award and plaque for the Town Hall.
- n. Tom volunteered to work with the Hartford Community Coalition on recycling at the 6/21 Block Party.
- o. Matt will contact the Mid Vermont Christian School and the Upper Valley Waldorf School about the book "Our Better Nature: Hopeful Excursions in Saving Biodiversity" and place the book order.
- p. Ted agreed to help Matt with picking up Green-Up Day collections on May 3rd and 4th.