

Approved Minutes of the
Hartford Conservation Commission
May 1, 2023

Members Present: Jon Bouton (9/7/24), Mary Hutchins (11/4/23), Ted Levin (11/15/25), Katie Mann (3/20/27) 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, May 1st in Room 2 of the Hartford Town Hall located at 171 Bridge Street, White River Junction. Vice-chair Katie Mann 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:** Katie asked if there are any changes to the agenda. There were none.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Katie asked if there are any changes to the draft minutes of 4/3/23. There were none. Katie stated that the HCC minutes of 4/3/23 are approved as written by unanimous consent.
3. **Public Comments:** Katie asked if there are any public comments. There were none.
4. **Pollinator Pathway:** Matt Osborn reported that he received an email from Tiffany Carlson of Vermont Spirits that they created a pollinator garden at the Quechee Gorge Village. She is interested in getting support from the Conservation Commission on an effort to create a pollinator pathway in Hartford. Katie Mann noted that it would be a big undertaking. It was agreed to find out more about the effort. Matt will invite Tiffany to the June 5th meeting to discuss.
5. **Town Forest Timber Harvest Update:** Tom Kahl noted that Long View Forest is responsible for seeding the log landings and areas severely affected by the timber harvest. Katie suggested including a wildflower mix in place of the conservation grass mix. There was discussion. Jon Bouton stated that the conservation mix is intended to germinate quickly and get the grasses established quickly. Wildflower seed tends to take longer to germinate and grow. The cost of using wildflower seed exclusively is much more expensive and there is some uncertainty about how well it will do. It was agreed to include some wildflower seed to supplement the conservation seed mix. Ted Levin volunteered to contact wildflower expert Spencer Hardy about wildflower species that would be appropriate to plant in a forest.

Matt reported that Long View submitted an invoice in the amount of \$1,057.50 to cover the cost of preparing the northern landing for the timber harvest and mulching the southern landing. The invoice was paid by the Town. Matt noted that the cost of cleaning up the site once it dries out is the contractual responsibility of Long View.

Tom reported that the mountain bike community did a lot of clean-up work of the trails impacted by the timber harvest.

Tom also reported that during the 4/18/23 meeting with the mountain bike community, it was collaboratively decided not to reroute the Moose Brook Trail and to focus on improvements to the Moose Brook Trail.

6. **Timber Harvest Public Outreach:** Katie noted that Forester AJ Follensbee will be doing a post timber harvest walk following Long View's clean-up. It was acknowledged that there is some

uncertainty as to the date since it has to be dry for Long View to come back. It was agreed that AJ's walk should occur following Long View clean-up and before the end of June if possible.

7. **Forest Interpretive Signs:** Katie volunteered to help Jon with the interpretive signs.
8. **Trail Forks/Facebook Trail Postings:** Katie reported that trail closures were posted in early April. Due to warm/dry weather in April and the work to clear trail timber harvest debris all of the trails except the Stick and west end of the WB Brown trails were reopened and the posting changed.
9. **HAC&TC T-Shirt Fund Donation:** Matt reported that he is seeking approval for the HCC request to provide HACTC \$250 for their work in the Town Forest. He will follow up.
10. **Town Forest Kiosk Sign Replacement:** Mary received a quote of \$25.83 for a 10" x 24" sign aluminum from a sign company in Barre that she uses for snow machine signs. Matt commented that it might be too small. He noted that last month, we discussed a 12" x 36" sign. Mary agreed to get a quote for a 12" x 36" sign. Tom suggested that once the quote is received, the sign should be ordered. The HCC agreed.
11. **Trails Day 2023:** Tom discussed possible projects for Trails Day. He noted that repair of the Moose Brook Bridge is necessary since the trail is a designated as a snowmobile trail. Tom agreed to talk with Tim Schaal about it to determine a scope of repair. Mary agreed to talk to the Hurricane Riders about whether the Club could provide assistance with materials for the bridge. Tom noted that also two stream crossing on the Moose Brook Trail needs work as well. He stated that the roof on the trailhead kiosk is in poor condition and needs replacement.
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 American 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. Regarding planting white oak trees, Jon suggested seeing if the HACTC class can do it this spring. If not, plant the trees in the fall. Planting white oak in the Town Forest is a way of making the Town Forest more resilient to climate change. The HCC agreed.
13. **Book "Our Better Nature":** Matt reported that he sent emails to the Mid Vermont Christian School and the Upper Valley Waldorf School and neither responded so he sent out a second email and received no response again. As a result, we have seven requests for the book "Our Better Nature: Hopeful Excursions in Saving Biodiversity". Katie suggested obtaining an additional 5 copies to have on hand to give to workshop leaders as a token of HCC's appreciation. The HCC agreed. Matt will place an order for 12 books.
14. **Book "Nature's Best Hope":** Katie reported that Karen Douville sent us an email about a children's adaptation of Ecologist/Entomologist Doug Tallamy's book "Nature's Best Hope". She suggested reviewing the book and providing copies to Hartford elementary schools if we like it. The HCC agreed. Tom will get a copy of the book before the next HCC meeting.
15. **Private Landowner Conservation Outreach:** Katie volunteered to draft a brief follow-up letter to all property owners sent letters in the past few years. Matt reported that he was contacted by a Dothan Road resident who received a letter from the Conservation Commission. They are interested in a conservation easement as well as talking to their neighbors about conservation easements. The HCC was pleased to hear the news.

16. Announcements/Reports:

- a. Vernal Pool Walk: Katie Mann reported that 34 people attended the vernal pool walk on April 29th. Kevin Tolan of VINS led the walk and Ben Lay of the Hartford Salamander Team helped out with a small group discussion. They found a spotted salamander and eggs of a Jefferson Salamander.

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

- a. Green-Up Day: Saturday, May 6th. Ted, Katie and Tom volunteered to help out.
- b. Bird Walk Town Forest: Saturday, May 20th.
- c. HTF Trail Work Day: Saturday June 3rd.
- d. Hartford Community Coalition Block Party: June 21st. Tom reported that the HCC was asked to be in charge of recycling for the event.

18. Next HCC Meeting: Katie reported that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 5th at 7:00 p.m.

19. Adjournment: Katie stated that the meeting was adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

20. Meeting Action Items:

- a. Matt will invite Tiffany Carlson to the June 5th meeting to discuss pollinator pathways.
- b. Ted volunteered to contact wildflower expert Spencer Hardy about wildflower species that would be appropriate to plant in a forest.
- c. It was agreed that AJ's post-harvest HTF walk should occur following Long View clean-up and if possible before the end of June.
- d. Katie volunteered to help Jon with the forest interpretive signs.
- e. Matt will inquire about providing the Hartford Area Career & Technology Center with \$250 for the work they completed in the Town Forest.
- f. Mary will get a price quote for the 12" x 36" Town Forest Kiosk sign. Once the quote is received, the sign will be ordered.
- g. Katie volunteered to draft the letter to the property owners who were sent natural resource letters over the past few years.
- h. Tom agreed to talk to Tim Schaal about rehabbing the Moose Brook Trail Bridge.
- i. Mary agreed to talk to the Hurricane Riders about whether the Club could provide assistance with materials for the Moose Brook Bridge.
- j. Jon will work with the American Chestnut Tree Foundation representative about planting blight resistant Chestnut Trees in the Town Forest.
- k. Jon will talk to Hartford Area Career & Technology Center Teacher Matt Dragon about planting White Oak trees in the Town Forest as a way of making the Town Forest more resilient to climate change.
- l. Tom volunteered to work with the Hartford Community Coalition on recycling at the 6/21 Block Party.
- m. Matt will place the book order for 12 copies of "Our Better Nature: Hopeful Excursions in Saving Biodiversity".
- n. Ted agreed to help Matt with picking up Green-Up Day collections on May 3rd and 5th.
- o. Tom will get a copy of Doug Tallamy's book "Nature's Best Hope" for the HCC to review.

21. HCC Member Terms: 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).

