

Approved Minutes of the
Hartford Conservation Commission
May 4, 2020

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

Staff Present: Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: HCC Selectboard Liaison Alan Johnson.

A remote meeting of the Conservation Commission in compliance with the Vermont Open Meeting Law was held on Monday, May 4, 2020. Tom Kahl called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

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 any changes to the minutes of April 6, 2020. Jon Bouton requested a change. The HCC agreed. Tom stated that the minutes are approved with the noted correction by unanimous consent.
3. **HCC Annual Officer Elections:** Tom Kahl noted that it is time to hold officer elections. Jon Bouton stated that Tom is doing an excellent job as chair. He made a motion to renew the existing officers: Tom Kahl as chair, Dana Hazen as vice-chair and Jon Bouton as treasurer. The motion was seconded by Katie Mann and approved 7 to 0.
4. **Forest Management Plan for Town Forest:** Tom Kahl noted that Jon Bouton and Matt Osborn will be going before the Selectboard tomorrow evening to discuss the Forest Management Plan. He stated that Matt and Jon will go through the powerpoint presentation with the HCC as a trial run. Jon and Matt went through the presentation and a brief discussion ensued. Tom asked about scheduling the next step after Selectboard comment which is a public meetings on the Plan. With the COVID-19 uncertainty, the HCC agreed to wait it out.

Jon noted that draft Forest Management Plan looks good. Matt has the combined HCC comments and will conduct a final review of comments and send to A.J. Follensbee next week.

5. **Natural Resource Landowner Outreach:** Tom Kahl noted that there are still three letters to go out and a follow-up site visit.
6. **Green-Up Day:** Matt Osborn noted that Green-Up Day was rescheduled from Saturday, May 2nd to Saturday, May 30th on account of COVID-19. He noted that it will be a very different event this year than in years past. In addition, we will have to work closely with Hartford Health Officer Brett Mayfield regarding details. Instead of people signing up in person and picking up bags inside the Town Hall and the Quechee Library, he suggested unstaffed tables outside. Tom Kahl agreed and suggested an on-line sign-up. The HCC agreed. Katie Mann stated that we must be very cautious and well-rehearsed with how we run Green-Up Day. It was agreed to set-up a Green-Up Committee to work with Matt. Jon Bouton, Angie Emerson and Katie volunteered. Lee Michaelides noted that the ticks are particularly bad this year so we should be warning volunteers. Matt agreed and noted that with the later date this year, poison ivy will be more prevalent as well. Angie Emerson suggested having the dumpsters out longer this year. Matt agreed to inquire. Matt asked who will be available to help out on Green-Up Day. Jon, Tom, Katie, Angie and Dana responded that they plan to participate.

7. Town Forest:

- a. Trails Committee: Tom Kahl reported that due to COVID-19, the May 9th trails work-day will be postponed to a later date. He noted that the Trails Committee will form a virtual sign-up for trails work once the stay at home order is lifted.
- b. VYCC Work Crew: Matt Osborn reported that Jenn Seredejko of VYCC will visit the Town Forest on May 6th to mark a re-route of the Pine Drop Trail and review the mountain bike proposed layout. He noted that it looks like the VYCC work crew will be scheduled for this summer or fall, but will have to adhere to physical distancing requirements while working.
- c. Boundary Signs: Jon Bouton suggested repainting the blazes along the Town Forest boundaries. He asked for volunteers to assist him. Lee Michaelides and Angie Emerson volunteered. Jon suggested that he notify Town Forest abutters of the re-blazing plans. Matt Osborn offered to provide Jon with a list of abutters.
- d. Town Forest Recreation Plan: Angie Emerson reported that a committee comprised of Jon Bouton, Lee Michaelides and Angie, have completed a draft of a three-page list of rules for the Town Forest to be incorporated in the 2018 Recreation Management Plan. Mary Hutchins suggested allowing ATV use for trail maintenance purposes. The HCC agreed. Tom Kahl suggested incorporating the three-page section at the beginning of the Plan. Tom suggested adding two items under prohibited activities, “establishing new trails without the authorization of the HCC” and “cutting or damaging trees or vegetation without HCC approval.” Tom also expressed concern about the statement, “it is not an appropriate venue to be advertised on the internet” would prohibit posting info on the List Serve or Town website. The HCC disagreed.

Matt Osborn expressed concern that prohibiting ATV's in the Town Forest may be controversial. He stated that in 2002, ATV pass-through use was allowed. The HCC stated that there isn't much ATV use in the Town Forest aside from the Class 4 section of Reservoir Road. Mary Hutchins noted that ATV's are used to haul deer out of the Town Forest during the fall deer season. The HCC agreed that ATV use of trails in the Town Forest wasn't appropriate. Matt also noted that the Parks and Recreation Department has worked closely with the Planning Department and Conservation Commission in the past. He suggested revising the item under Goals and Strategies. The HCC agreed.

Matt Osborn was asked why the three-page list has to be incorporated in the 2018 Recreation Management Plan. Matt responded that the 2018 Recreation Management Plan was presented to the Selectboard and we told them that the Plan will come back to them for adoption. Matt Osborn offered to set up a meeting with Planning Director Lori Hirshfield, Tom, Angie and Matt to discuss the changes to the Draft Recreation Management Plan and incorporating it in the SE Group Recreation Management Plan. The HCC agreed that we should do that.

8. **David Chang Conservation Area and AVCC Tiny Grant**: Matt Osborn reported that with help from Dana Hazen on the proposal, he submitted an application to the Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions (AVCC) Tiny Grant program. If awarded, the \$250 grant will pay for herbicides to treat invasive plants in the David Chang Conservation Area. He noted that consultant Redstart will donate over \$1,000 of their time and the HCC will donate 12 hours of volunteer time as well which will be applied toward the local match.

The HCC agreed with the design of the David Chang boundary marker presented by Jon Bouton, but they will not be purchased until after the town budget freeze is lifted.

9. **Block Party Recycling:** Angie Emerson reported that the Hartford Community Coalition Block Party was cancelled due to COVID-19. She noted that they made progress on making it a zero-waste event. She hopes to reach out to volunteers to help with the zero-waste event next year.
10. **Stream Restoration Visit:** Katie Mann reported that the site visit has been put on hold until the fall due to COVID-19.
11. **Quechee Lakes Land Sale:** Matt Osborn reported that he will mail the letter to the Vermont Land Trust with the description of the natural resource value of the Quechee Lakes Corporation (Taurus Investment Holdings) 640-acre property that is for sale.
12. **HCC Awards Plaque:** Matt Osborn reported 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 in the Town Hall.
13. **Vernal Pool Walk:** Jon Bouton reported that although the vernal pool walk was cancelled, he visited the vernal pool on the south side of the Town Forest and noted that there were numerous egg masses. He also reported that a group of Hartford residents formed an amphibian team and was active during the spring migration. The group posted on the Hartford List Serve and they have a Facebook page. He suggested coordinating with the group in the future. The HCC agreed.
14. **Bird Outreach:** Mary Hutchins agreed to send Matt the links to information on Bobolinks and Matt will post on the HCC webpage.
15. **Announcements:** Jon Bouton reported that Chittenden County Forester Ethan Trapper has been doing an excellent job presenting forestry webinars on a variety of topics. Jon highly recommends them.
16. **Next Meeting:** Tom Kahl noted that the next HCC meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 1st.
17. **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.
18. **Meeting Action Items:**
 - a) Matt agreed to get HCC comments back to A.J. regarding on the draft Forest Management Plan.
 - b) It was agreed to set-up a Green-Up Committee to work with Matt. Jon, Angie and Katie Mann volunteered.
 - c) Matt agreed to inquire about having the Green-Up dumpsters longer this year.
 - d) Jon, Tom, Katie, Angie and Dana responded that they plan on participating in Green-Up Day.
 - e) The Trails Committee will form a virtual sign-up for trails work once the stay at home order is lifted
 - f) Matt offered to provide Jon with a list of abutters.
 - g) Matt agreed to take combined HCC comments on the Draft Recreation Management Plan, revise it and sent it to the HCC for their comments.
 - h) Matt agreed to set up a meeting with Planning Director Lori Hirshfield, for Tom, Angie and Matt to discuss the changes to the Draft Recreation Management Plan and incorporating it in the SE Group Recreation Management Plan.
 - i) Matt will mail the letter to the Vermont Land Trust with the description of the natural resource value of the Quechee Lakes Corporation (Taurus Investment Holdings) 640-acre property that is for sale.
 - j) Matt will work with a sign maker on developing a design for the HCC Conservation Award plaque.

k) Mary agreed to send Matt the links to information on Bobolinks and Matt will post on the HCC webpage.