

**Approved Minutes of the**  
Hartford Conservation Commission  
June 5, 2023

**Members Present:** 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:** Tiffany Carlson, Skylar Claud, Chris Beetham and Selectboard Liaison Mary Erdei, .

A hybrid Hartford Conservation Commission (HCC) Meeting in compliance of the Open Meeting Law was held on Monday, June 5<sup>th</sup> 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 and introductions.

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 5/1/23. There were none. Tom stated that the HCC minutes of 5/1/23 are approved as written by unanimous consent.
3. **Public Comments:** Tom asked if there are any public comments. There were none.
4. **Pollinator Pathway:** Tiffany Carlson of Vermont Spirits was present to discuss pollinator pathways. Tiffany and her husband created a pollinator garden at their Quechee Gorge Village property and at their Dewey Mills Road residence. She noted that **Pollinator Pathway** was established in 2017. Their work promotes native plants and pollinators. She is interested in getting support from the Conservation Commission on an effort to create a pollinator pathway in Hartford. She noted that the HCC has created brochures on recommended plants and invasive plants. Katie Mann noted that the HCC needs to discuss their priorities before taking on another project. Tom noted the recent pollinator work of the Hartford Garden Club. Tiffany noted that VINS has a pollinator garden as well so there are already the makings of a pollinator pathway in Quechee. Tom asked if there are specific guidelines for pollinator pathways. Tiffany responded no and added that pathways can be large or small. Katie noted that the Vermont Center for Ecostudies has experience with pollinator gardens. Ted asked what type of bees are you trying to help. Tiffany responded native bees and native plants. Tom suggested that Tiffany contact the Hartford Salamander Team since they do regular workshops that draw a lot of people. Tom agreed that the request is consistent with the work of the HCC. The HCC agreed to discuss at the next meeting. Tom thanked Tiffany for talking to the HCC.
5. **Climate Action Plan:** Lee Michaelides reported that the Climate Action Team is working on updates. He noted that in May, the Tree Board as part of their VT Urban & Community Forestry Gant removed Japanese Knotweed from a section of Lyman Point Park riverbank and planted 14 trees from their nursery including Willows, Cottonwood and Maples. The idea is to control the Knotweed and open the view of the White River.
6. **Town Forest Timber Harvest Update:** Tom Kahl reported that Long View Forest completed timber harvest remedial work including seeding disturbed areas and covering with hay. Tom toured the site and reported that the impacted areas were left in good condition. He reported that A.J. Follensbee determined that the work was satisfactory and that the Long View security deposit be released. He credited A.J. for marking the trails before the harvest to reduce the impact on trails. He noted that the harvester and forwarder operators were very conscientious and after the harvest blocked off the skidder trails. Jon Bouton agreed and noted that he was very pleased with the work and how the forest was left.

Katie noted that brambles are considered the best plants for open areas to encourage pollinators. That includes wild raspberries, blackberries and black raspberries. There was discussion about seeding for brambles. The HCC agreed to schedule a HCC work outing on Monday, August 17<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. Ted agreed to do a short presentation on birds and berries. Katie noted that the only issue is the 6' stumps that remain that the HAC&TC Natural Resources Class were planning to cut if they had the time. Ted suggested leaving the stumps for woodpeckers.

7. **Post Timber Harvest Walk:** Tom noted that Forester A.J. Follensbee will be doing a post timber harvest walk on Tuesday, June 27<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m.
8. **Town Forest Interpretive Signs:** Katie reported that she and Jon have made progress on the interpretive signs. She noted that Hinesburg has a good example of a sign that addresses what we see today. Jon reported that he found a good example of information on sustainable forestry. Katie and Jon will continue to work on the interpretive signs. Tom asked if the signs could be completed by fall. Jon and Katie responded yes.
9. **Town Forest Invasive Plants:** Katie reported that on Trails Day, she focused on removing Honeysuckle by the former Lower Hurricane Reservoir. She noted that there also are areas of Barberry, Garlic Mustard, Buckthorn and Japanese Knotweed in the Town Forest that we need to monitor. Jon suggested that the HCC develop a plan to control the invasives. The HCC agreed. Katie suggested that the HCC sponsor a spring invasive plant removal event at the Town Forest. The HCC agreed. Katie also suggested considering moving Trails Day to the fall.
10. **Trail Forks/Facebook Trail Postings:** Katie reported that all of the trails are now open. She contacted Anna Schaal who will update Trail Forks posting.
11. **HAC&TC T-Shirt Fund Donation:** Matt reported that there is the warrant article process for organizations that are requesting donations. In addition, since the Memorandum of Understanding with the Hartford Area Career & Technology Center (HACTC) stipulates that the school will do the work for free, they can't invoice us for work. He suggested as an alternative the HCC members and he could donate \$20 to the HACTC natural resources program t-shirt fund. Several members expressed support for the idea. Matt asked that donations go to him by the end of the week. Matt will deliver the donations to HACTC teacher Matt Dragon.
12. **Town Forest Signs:** Tom reported that three trail posts need to be reinstalled. Lee volunteered to assist Tom. Mary reported that she is waiting for a quote for the new 12" x 36" kiosk sign. Once she receives the quote, she will inform Matt who will make the payment.
13. **Trails Day 2023:** Tom reported that despite the rain, there was a good turnout. Over 20 people participated in constructing a bridge on Three Bridges Trail, removing invasive plants, and rerouting a section of the Moose Brook Trail. Tom noted that repair of the Moose Brook snowmobile Bridge remains. Tom and Katie met with Tim Schaal on May 5, 2023 and Tim agreed to determine and design a scope of work for the bridge repair. Mary agreed to talk to the Hurricane Riders about whether the Club would provide assistance with materials for the bridge.
14. **Tree Plantings in the Town Forest:** Jon Bouton reported that the Hartford Area Career & Technology Center Natural Resources Class will plant the White Oak trees in the fall. It is a way of making the Town Forest more resilient to climate change. Jon also reported that he is waiting to hear back from the American Chestnut Tree Foundation (ACTF) about planting blight resistant American Chestnut Trees in the Town Forest. Jon agreed to pursue.

- 15. HCC Opening:** Tom reported that the Selectboard adopted a committee/commission appointment policy at their May 31<sup>st</sup> meeting. Tom also reported that Skylar Claud submitted an application to serve on the Conservation Commission and Chris Beetham also expressed interest in joining.
- 16. Book “Our Better Nature”:** Matt reported that he was asked to confirm Green-Up Day costs before ordering the books. Once that takes place, he will make the order.
- 17. Book “Nature’s Best Hope”:** Tom reported that he purchased Ecologist/Entomologist Doug Tallamy’s book “Nature’s Best Hope”, read it and thinks it would be a good addition to the Town and school libraries. Katie noted that the book is intended for 3<sup>rd</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> graders. The HCC agreed to purchase for schools and libraries. Matt will reach out to schools and libraries to see if they are interested in receiving a copy of the book.
- 18. Private Landowner Conservation Outreach:** Katie reported that she prepared a draft follow-up letter to all property owners sent letters in the past few years. Tom and Matt agreed to review the draft. Once the letter is finalized, Matt will prepare the mailing.
- 19. Announcements/Reports:**
- Green-Up Day: Matt reported that there were 324 volunteers and 3.11 tons of material was collected. Included were 51 tires, a refrigerator, scrap metal and building debris. He noted that it was a successful event although there were fewer volunteers this year. The average since 2000 is 400 volunteers. Katie suggested using the digital sign at the Town Hall to advertise the event. Matt responded that it was used. He reported that the Town is purchasing a permanent message board for the Town Hall. Katie also suggested purchasing a banner for more visibility. Matt agreed to investigate.
  - Story Walk: Tom reported that the HCC approved the Story Walk request from the Quechee Library to erect in the Town Forest as they have done the last two years.
  - Bird Walk: Ted reported that twelve folks participated in the May 20<sup>th</sup> Bird Walk at the Town Forest. They identified 23 birds including several neotropical bird species.
  - Kestrel Boxes: Ted reported that two kestrel boxes were installed on Sunrise Farm. He noted that Kestrel is the smallest native falcon which has been in decline in recent decades. The boxes are set up in meadows with a southeast orientation. One other kestrel box was installed last year. The HCC agreed to purchase two additional boxes. Ted will get a quote on the cost.
  - Conservation Commission T-Shirts: Katie suggested that the HCC obtain t-shirts. The HCC agreed. Mary Hutchins volunteered to design it.
- 20. Upcoming Events:** Tom reported on the following events:
- Spider Walk: Matt reported that Ben Fletcher of the Hartford Salamander Team (HST) contacted him. HST is sponsoring a spider walk on the Quechee Green on Saturday June 10<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 p.m.
  - Hartford Community Coalition Block Party: Wednesday, June 21<sup>st</sup> 5-8 p.m. Tom reported that the HCC was asked to be in charge of recycling for the event but hasn’t heard back from them. Tom noted that he can’t do it alone. There were no volunteers. He asked if the HCC wants to have an information table at the event. Lee was the only other members who may be available. Lee said that he would let Tom know by the end of next week if he will be available. Tom agreed to get back to the Hartford Community Coalition.
  - Town Forest Post Timber Harvest Walk: Tuesday, June 27<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. Tom noted that Matt has contacted neighbors, the mountain bike community and posted on the Hartford List Serv. Tom asked Matt to continue to publicize the event.

**18. Next HCC Meeting:** Tom noted that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 10<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m.

**19. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

**20. Meeting Action Items:**

- a. The HCC agreed to discuss pollinator pathways at the next meeting.
- b. The HCC agreed to schedule a HCC work outing to plant pollinator plants in the HTF on Monday, 8/17 at 6:00 p.m.
- c. Ted agreed to do a short presentation on birds and berries at the 8/17 work outing.
- d. Forester A.J. Follensbee will be doing a post timber harvest walk on Tuesday, June 27<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m.
- e. Katie will continue to work with Jon with the forest management interpretive signs.
- f. The HCC will develop a plan to control the invasives in the Town Forest.
- g. Mary will get a price quote for the 12” x 36” Town Forest Kiosk sign. Once the quote is received, Mary will contact Matt who will pay for the sign.
- h. Matt will deliver the T shirt fund donations to HACTC teacher Matt Dragon.
- i. Tom and Matt agreed to review the draft natural resources letter.
- j. Matt will mail letters to the property owners who were sent natural resource letters over the past few years.
- k. Tom agreed coordinate the scope of work for the Moose Brook Trail repair that Tim Schaal is developing.
- l. Mary agreed to talk to the Hurricane Riders about whether the Club could provide assistance with supplying materials for the bridge Moose Brook Bridge repair.
- m. Jon will work with the American Chestnut Tree Foundation representative about planting blight resistant Chestnut Trees in the Town Forest.
- n. Jon will talk to Hartford Area Career & Technology Center Teacher Matt Dragon about planting White Oak trees in the Town Forest.
- o. Tom will contact the Hartford Community Coalition about recycling at the 6/21 Block Party.
- p. Matt will place the book order for 12 copies of “Our Better Nature: Hopeful Excursions in Saving Biodiversity”.
- q. Matt will reach out to schools and libraries to see if they are interested in receiving a copy of Doug Tallamy’s children’s version of “Natures Best Hope”.
- r. Matt agreed to investigate a banner for Green-Up Day.
- s. Ted will get a quote on the cost of two additional kestrel boxes.
- t. Mary Hutchins volunteered to design a HCC t-shirt.

**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).