

Approved Minutes of the
Hartford Conservation Commission
July 12, 2021

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: Selectboard Liaison Dennis Brown and County Forester A.J. Follensbee.

A Conservation Commission Meeting was held on Monday, July 12th at 7:00 p.m. in Room 2 of the Hartford Town Hall at 171 Bridge Street, White River Junction. Chair Tom Kahl called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The meeting was also accessible remotely via MS Teams and several people participated that way.

1. Timber Harvest Bid Results: Matt Osborn reported that there was only one bid for the timber sale. A mandatory pre-bid tour was held on June 21st and bids were due by and received on July 6th. The bid amount was not favorable to the Town due primarily to the deductions for the construction of a new landing and access road. Tom Kahl asked Forester A.J. Follensbee if he knew why we only received one bid. A.J. responded that he didn't know but thought the large size of the project might deter some loggers. Also, the requirement to use a forwarder limits the number of loggers since not all loggers have that equipment. The RFP was sent to a list of seventeen loggers that use forwarders.

There was discussion about whether to accept the bid or to re-advertise. The consensus was to re-advertise and prefer a winter, 2022 timber harvest, but leave the project completion date as June 30, 2023.

There was discussion about a lump sum bid vs a mill rate bid. The RFP required a lump sum bid. There is more risk to the logger for a lump sum bid. Dana Hazen thinks a mill rate bid will encourage more bidders. It was agreed to see if the Town would allow a mill sale bid.

There was discussion about using one of the existing landings (one adjacent to the trailhead parking area and the other at the north end of the property on Reservoir Road). Matt noted that an active log landing next to the trailhead parking area would not be acceptable to the Town due to liability concerns. Since the Town Forest has year-round recreation, it would not be advisable to close the parking lot and public use. The landing at the north end of the property is fairly close to two residences and its use would need to be discussed with the residents.

There was discussion whether to require the use of a forwarder. Matt Osborn stated that the requirement to use a forwarder and do winter harvesting ensures fewer impacts which is important given the property has a high level of public use. A forwarder was used in 2005 and 2008 and the Town did not receive any complaints about the work.

Tom Kahl made a motion to recommend that the timber sale be rebid and an alternative provided for a north landing option. Jon Bouton requested a friendly amendment to do a mill scale price instead of a lump sum bid if the Town would allow it. Tom accepted the amendment. Angie Emerson seconded the motion. The motion was approved 7-0. Matt will inquire about a mill rate bid. A.J. will revise the RFP and Matt will re-advertise the bid.

2. Changes to the Agenda: Tom Kahl noted that he received an e-mail from a resident about a possible wetlands violation. He suggested adding it to the agenda. The HCC agreed. Tom asked if there are any other changes to the agenda. There were none.

3. **Approval of Minutes:** Tom Kahl asked if there were any changes to the minutes of June 7, 2021 HCC Meeting. There were no changes. Tom stated that the minutes are approved as written by unanimous consent.
4. **Fiscal Year Expenditures:** Matt Osborn reported the following expenditures for fiscal year 2021. He noted that due to the challenging fiscal situation, there has been a budget freeze and each expenditure needs approval from the Town Manager and Finance Director.

<u>Category</u>	<u>2020/2021 Budget</u>	<u>2020/2021 Expenditures</u>
Travel & Meetings	\$175	\$0
Materials and Supplies	\$200	\$0
Memberships	\$250	\$50
Advertising	\$180	\$97
Contracted Serv. (Green-Up)	\$2,000	\$828
Forestry	\$650	\$650
Conservation Fund	\$0	\$14,137

Tom requested that the HCC Budget be put on the next meeting, August 30th agenda and written list of HCC expenditures and the balance of the conservation fund be presented to the HCC in preparation of the upcoming Town budget process. Matt Osborn agreed.

5. **Old River Road Dumpsite:** Matt Osborn reported that the White River Partnership offered their assistance cleaning up dumpsite off Old River Road between the VA Cut-off Road Bridge and the RSD Warehouse. Matt noted that the HCC cleaned up the site on a few occasions going back to the late 1990s. The HCC eventually stopped cleaning up the site due to the steepness of the slope, the risk of injury and the fact that items kept being dumped there. Matt discussed solutions with former Town Highway Superintendent Allyn Ricker, but there were no simple solutions. Allyn did not think that a “no dumping” sign would likely be effective. Two weeks ago, Matt visited the site with Planning Director Lori Hirshfield. Lori thinks there are too many issues for the Town to act quickly on it. Discussion followed. Suggestions included signage, a chain link fence and talking to the property owner. Jon Bouton responded that he will convey this back to the White River Partnership and see if they would take this on themselves.
6. **Town Forest:**
 - a. Trails Day: Tom Kahl reported that the 6/19 Trails Day event was a success with 25-30 people attending. A crew built a 28’ bridge on the Three Bridges Trail, a crew worked on a large wet spot on Simonds Way and a crew worked to establish drainage channels to run across Jill’s Trail and not down it. Tom thanked Jon, Katie, Lee and Matt for helping out. Matt noted that he started promoting the trail maintenance sign-up. He thanked Katie for creating the sign-up form and link.
 - b. Trails Map/Signs: Dana Hazen agreed to make three minor revisions to the revised trails map. Once the revisions are made, the map will be printed and sent to Tim Schaal for sign installation.
 - c. Recreation Management Plan. Matt Osborn reported that he was told that scheduling for Selectboard Meetings is easing up, and he hopes to get on a Selectboard agenda in the coming weeks.

- d. Wayfinding Signs. Matt Osborn reported that VTrans indicated that the wayfinding signs are Town signs and should be outside of the State right-of-way. Matt noted that there are existing signposts with signs at both ends of Center of Town Road, that attaching additional Town Forest signs to these existing posts appear to be out of the State right-of-way. Matt will verify the right-of-way with VTrans. He reported that he requested a quote for the five signs and two signposts. He is waiting to hear back from the sign company. Once the quote is received, Matt will seek approval from the Town to purchase the signs.
- e. Story Walk and Scavenger Hunt Request: Jon Bouton reported that Quechee Library staff have set it up and it is actively in use. HCC members are encouraged to attend the 11 am Saturday August 7th discussion, exhibit, and celebration at the Quechee Library to close out this program.
7. **Private Landowner Outreach**: Tom Kahl reported that he left a message with a Jericho property owner about a site visit with Tom, but has not heard a response. Katie Mann reported that Matt Osborn provided the mailing addresses and other information on the next ten high ranking properties. Katie agreed to work on maps. Once completed, letters will be sent out.
8. **Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions (AVCC) Tiny Grant Program**: Matt Osborn reported that the check from the AVCC grant was received. Matt will coordinate getting an invoice from the North Branch Nature Center and process payment.
9. **Climate Action Plan Report**: Dennis Brown reported that the Draft Climate Action Plan was presented to the Selectboard on June 29th. Public comments are being accepted and the Plan will go back to the Selectboard in August for approval.
10. **Invasive Plants**: Jon Bouton reported that he has been providing the Parks & Recreation Department with information on invasive plants for distribution on the weekly Constant Contact e-mail. Jon noted that an earlier report on Giant Hogweed on High Pasture Road was likely to be Cow Parsnip. He noted that it had been cut down. Dana Hazen will be going out to the David Chang Conservation Area for Phase II of the treatment on July 24th. Tom Kahl volunteered to assist Dana.
11. **HCC Logo**: Matt Osborn agreed to investigate the current Town process for developing a logo for the HCC.
12. **Announcements/Other Business**:
 - a. Wetlands Complaint: Tom Kahl reported that he received an e-mail from a resident who was upset about a property manager cutting down wetland's vegetation. Tom stated that Matt Osborn and he will investigate.
13. **Next Meeting**: Tom Kahl reported that the next HCC meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 30th at 7:00 p.m. He asked if we should continue the hybrid meeting format. The HCC agreed.
14. **Adjournment**: The meeting was adjourned at 9:09 p.m.
15. **Meeting Action Items**:
 - a) Matt will inquire about a mill rate bid.
 - b) A.J. will revise the RFP.
 - c) Matt will re-advertise the RFP for the timber sale.

- d) Matt agreed to obtain a list of HCC expenditures since the end of the last fiscal year and inquire about the current balance of the conservation fund.
- e) Jon agreed to get back to the White River Partnership about the Old River Road dump site.
- f) Dana agreed to make revisions to the revised trails map. Once the revisions are made, the map will be printed, posted on the HCC website, and also sent to Tim Schaal for sign installation.
- g) Matt agreed to continue posting on the List Serve about the trail maintenance registration.
- h) Once the quote for the wayfinding signs and post are received, Matt will seek approval from the Town to purchase the signs.
- i) Katie agreed to work on maps for the next ten property owners of ranked parcels in Hartford.
- j) Matt agreed to have funds directed to the North Branch Nature Center.
- k) Dana will be going out to the David Chang Conservation Area for Phase II of the treatment on July 24th. Tom Kahl volunteered to assist Dana.
- l) Matt agreed to investigate the current Town process for developing a logo for the HCC.
- m) Tom and Matt will investigate about the wetlands complaint.