

Approved Minutes of the
Hartford Conservation Commission
July 17, 2023

Members Present: Jon Bouton (9/7/24), Lee Michaelides (10/31/26) and chair Tom Kahl (8/24/24).

Staff Present: Town Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: Chris Beetham, Sky Claud, Suzanne Enser of the Ottawaquechee Natural Resource Conservation District and Selectboard Liaison Mary Erdei.

A hybrid Hartford Conservation Commission (HCC) Meeting in compliance of the Open Meeting Law was held on Monday, July 17th 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 7:04 p.m. and proceeded to read the Hybrid Meeting Script followed by roll call. Tom welcomed recently appointed Conservation Commission member Skylar Claud.

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 6/5/23. There were none. Tom stated that the HCC minutes of 6/5/23 are approved as written by unanimous consent.
3. **Public Comments:** Tom asked if there are any public comments. There were none.
4. **White River Natural Resource Conservation District Survey:** Suzanne Enser, Manager of the Ottawaquechee Natural Resource Conservation District was present to discuss the survey that is being sponsored by the White River Natural Resource Conservation District. She noted that the Conservation Districts regularly conduct surveys as a way of gauging public opinion about natural resources and the use of public funds. Suzanne agreed to send Matt the link to the survey and the deadline. Matt will then forward to the HCC. Jon Bouton noted that the Conservation Districts bring federal funds to the area and landowners automatically become members of the District. He noted the importance of the survey to the District. Tom thanked Suzanne for attending the meeting.
5. **Pollinator Pathway:** Tom reported that this is a follow-up discussion of Tiffany Carlson's request that the Conservation Commission become a partner to create a pollinator pathway in Hartford. Tom noted that the organization Pollinator Pathway promotes native plants, pollinators and diversity. He thinks the HCC should get involved. He noted that the Hartford Garden Club is interested in becoming a partner as well. Tom volunteered to look into pollinator pathways for further discussion at the next meeting. Sky Claud volunteered to look at pollinator websites. Jon noted that he is conducting an experiment at his home allowing his lawn to go wild. As a result, he has two varieties of nesting warblers this summer.
6. **Town Forest Timber Harvest and Status of the Forest Management Plan:** Tom Kahl reported that timber harvest was completed. He suggested that the HCC send a thank you note to Forester A.J. Follensbee for all the time and effort he put into the project including preparation of the Forest Management Plan, overseeing the timber harvest and holding a series of public education events. The HCC agreed.

Tom pulled out the Forest Management Plan and began looking at the Schedule for Management Activities on page 43 of the Plan so the HCC could determine any remaining management activities that need to be done. He noted that we have to finish boundary line painting. Jon and Lee volunteered. The next item was monitoring and removing invasive plants. Work has begun but more work is needed. Lee Michaelides suggested asking the public to identify invasive plants in the Town

Forest and GPS their location. The HCC agreed. Tom stated that a workday to remove invasive plants is planned for next spring. Tom noted that the Plan recommended mowing the former Lower Hurricane Reservoir meadow annually. Jon suggested every 2-3 years. Tom noted that some would advise leaving it alone. It was agreed to continue discussing at next months' meeting. Tom reported that the timber harvest accomplished several items in Stands 4 and 5 except that the patch cut wasn't undertaken. The remaining recommended management activities in the Hartford Town Forest Management Plan are specific harvests in Stands 2 and 3 with schedules from 2026 to 2035.

7. **Post Timber Harvest Walk:** Tom reported that Forester A.J. Follensbee led a post timber harvest walk on June 27th. Tom noted that there was a small turnout.
8. **Trail Forks/Facebook Trail Postings:** Skylar suggested keeping trails open and volunteered to post a sign about leave no trace principles at the trailhead kiosk. Lee noted that the Boston Lot and Union Village trails are currently closed due to wet and muddy conditions. The HCC agreed to post a notice on Trail Forks that the trails are closed but let the local mountain bikers decide if it is too wet to ride or not. Lee agreed to contact Anna Schaal about the Trail Forks posting.
9. **Hurricane Trail Run:** Matt reported that the Parks and Recreation Department is considering postponing this weekend's Hurricane Trail Run due to excessively wet conditions due to recent heavy rains. Tom noted that Ted Levin recommended canceling the race after walking the trails. The HCC voted unanimously to not allow the trail run in the Hartford Town Forest since there is so much standing water and mud on the trails at this time and more rain is forecasted this week.
10. **Town Forest Signs:** Tom reported that he installed the last trail signpost that needed to be installed in the Town Forest. He noted that the new sign for the trailhead kiosk arrived. Matt and Tom agreed to install the sign this week. The HCC extended their gratitude to Mary Hutchins for designing the sign and obtaining a quote from the sign maker.
11. **HAC&TC T-Shirt Fund Donation:** Matt reported that he received and distributed \$200 in donations for the HACTC natural resources program t-shirt fund. He noted that HACTC teacher Matt Dragon was very thankful for the donation.
12. **Moose Brook Trail Bridge:** Tom reported that Tim Schaal has agreed to donate his time and materials to design and repair the bridge that is on this designated trail for snowmachines.
13. **Hartford Salamander Team Request:** Tom reported that the Hartford Salamander Team is hosting Fungi programming in July and is looking for financial assistance from the Conservation Commission. The events include a fungi foray which includes a local fungi teacher leading a session in the forest how to identify edible mushrooms and then going indoors to learn about cooking mushrooms. The second event will include an introduction to fungi species. HCC unanimously supported co-sponsoring the two events with the Hartford Salamander team. Matt will seek administrative approval.
14. **Book "Our Better Nature":** Matt reported that the books were purchased and delivered to the Town. Matt delivered the books to three Hartford libraries and will deliver copies to three public school libraries once school is in session.
15. **Book "Nature's Best Hope":** Matt reported that he contacted the four town libraries about Ecologist/Entomologist Doug Tallamy's book "Nature's Best Hope Young Person's Edition". All four libraries would like a copy. Matt will contact the school librarians once school is in session.

- 16. Private Landowner Conservation Outreach:** Matt agreed to review the draft letter, finalize it and prepare the mailing.
- 17. HCC Conservation Award:** Lee stated that he will work on written description of the awards program.
- 17. HCC Opening:** Jon expressed his regrets that he has to step down from the Conservation Commission. He noted that he still plans to work with the HCC as time permits. Tom thanked Jon for his fourteen years of service on the Conservation Commission. Others joined in. Chris Beethan stated that he plans to apply to fill the HCC opening.
- 18. Announcements/Reports:**
- a. Hartford Community Coalition Block Party: Tom reported that he and Matt directed the public recycling/composting for the June 21st Block Party event. Tom noted that about 80% of items were composted or recycled. Matt noted that folks had trouble following directions. Mary Erdei suggested in the future displaying the items themselves to show which bin to use instead of written directions. Tom volunteered to send a thank you note to the Hartford Community Coalition for their composting and recycling efforts.
- 19. Upcoming Events:** Tom reported on the following events:
- a. 8/17 Birds and Berries Workshop: Tom suggested confirming with Ted Levin about his availability to go forward with the workshop.
- 20. Next HCC Meeting:** Tom noted that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 28th at 7:00 p.m.
- 21. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 8:38 p.m.
- 22. Meeting Action Items:**
- a. Matt will forward the link to the White River Natural Resource Conservation District survey and the survey deadline to the HCC.
 - b. Tom volunteered to look into pollinator pathways for further discussion at the next meeting.
 - c. Sky volunteered to look at pollinator websites.
 - d. Jon and Lee volunteered to complete boundary painting.
 - e. Tom will send a thank you note to Forester A.J. Follensbee for his work and dedication assisting he HCC with the Forest Management Plan update and timber harvest since 2019.
 - f. It was agreed to continue discussing management of the Lower Hurricane Reservoir meadow at the 8/28 meeting.
 - g. Sky volunteered to post at the HTF kiosk and parking lot a sign about leave no trace principles at the trailhead kiosk.
 - h. Matt and Tom agreed to install the new Town Forest kiosk sign this week.
 - i. Matt will deliver the book “Our Better Nature” to school librarians once school is in session.
 - j. Matt will reach out to schools’ librarians to see if they are interested in receiving a copy of the book “Nature’s Best Hope Young Person’s Edition” before he orders this book.
 - k. Lee will work on written description of the HCC Awards Program.
 - l. Tom agreed to contact Ted Levin to confirm that he will lead the Birds and Berries workshop planned for 8/17.
 - m. Matt agreed to review the draft natural resources letter and mail the letter to property owners.

- n. Tom will send a thank you note to the Hartford Community Coalition regarding their composting/recycling efforts.
- o. Matt will seek administrative approval for the \$300 donation to the Hartford Salamander Team for the HCC to co-sponsor the HST Fungi events.

23. HCC Member Terms: Jon Bouton (9/7/24), Sky Claud (7/31/27), 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).