

Approved Minutes of the
Hartford Conservation Commission
August 30, 2021

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

Staff Present: Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: Selectboard Liaison Dennis Brown, County Forester A.J. Follensbee, Christian Pelletier of the White River Partnership.

A Conservation Commission Meeting was held on Monday, August 30th 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. **Changes to the Agenda:** Tom Kahl asked if there are any changes to the agenda. There were none.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Tom Kahl asked if there are any changes to the Minutes of the July 12, 2021 HCC Meeting. There were no changes. Tom stated that the minutes are approved as written by unanimous consent.
3. **Town Forest Timber Harvest:** A.J. Follensbee reported that there was only one logger (Longview) who attended the bid showing on August 23rd. The RFP was sent to a list of seventeen loggers that use forwarders. A.J. noted that Longview was pleased to hear that we are asking for a mill scale instead of a lump sum bid. A.J. stated that Longview thinks the new landing will require 9-10 truckloads of gravel and that is why the cost of developing the landing is so high. He added that there is a bid alternate to use the north landing on Reservoir Road as an alternative. That landing hasn't been used since the 1980s. Longview also suggested a turnaround north of the Trailhead Parking Area. Bids are due on Tuesday, September 7th.

There was discussion about a logger not getting the RFP before the mandatory bid showing. The HCC would like to accommodate the logger if they are interested in providing a bid for the project. Matt Osborn agreed to inquire about the Town policy. A.J. will send the RFP to Mary who will have it forwarded to the logger so they can see if they are interested.

Tom Kahl reported that he heard back from Matt Dragon, Natural Resources teacher at the Hartford Area Career Technology Center. Matt is very enthusiastic about having his Natural Resources Class work on projects in the Town Forest. A.J. suggested that the Natural Resources Class could assist in the timber harvest by removing stumps at the new landing, install a logging bridge and do post-timber harvest work.

4. **Source to the Sea Clean-Up:** Jon Bouton reported that the White River Partnership (WRP) is promoting the September 11th Source to the Sea fall clean-up of rivers sponsored by the Connecticut River Watershed Council. Christian Pelletier of the WRP was present to talk about it. He noted that since Covid-19, there has been an increase in recreational use of our rivers and that can result in more trash. WRP is encouraging watershed towns to participate in the clean-up. WRP is offering free trash disposal for items collected including tires if we can transport the items to their office in South Royalton. The HCC agreed to participate from 10:00 a.m. to noon. Angie Emerson, Jon Bouton and Matt Osborn volunteered. Matt will request the use of a truck from the Parks and Recreation Department. Jon volunteered to donate trash bags. Matt agreed to post on the Hartford Listserve to see if we can get volunteers. It was agreed to clean up Lyman Point Park, Watson Park, Clifford Park, West Hartford Bridge swim hole and pull-offs on Route 14.

5. **Old River Road Dumpsite:** Christian Pelletier reported that the White River Partnership will be partnering with the Natural Resources Class of the Hartford Area Career Technology Center to clean-up the dumpsite off Old River Road between the VA Cut-off Road Bridge and the RSD Warehouse from September 8-10. The HCC agreed that this is great news and thanked Christian Pelletier for spearheading the effort to clean up the site.
6. **Hurricane Hill Run:** Matt Osborn reported that the Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) will be sponsoring the annual Hurricane Hill Run on October 16th. He noted that they have held the run for several years and only use a couple of trails in the Town Forest. The PARD is seeking permission to use a small portion of the Town Forest for the event. Angie Emerson made a motion to approve the request. It was seconded by Mary Hutchins and unanimously approved.
7. **Fiscal Year 2022/2023 HCC Budget:** Matt Osborn noted the current budget for the Conservation Commission. He reported that the Town spending freeze has ended and the HCC is free to use designated funds.

<u>Category</u>	<u>2021/2022 Budget</u>
Travel & Meetings	\$175
Materials and Supplies	\$200
Memberships	\$250
Advertising	\$180
Contracted Serv. (Green-Up)	\$2,000
Forestry	\$650
<u>Conservation Fund (Reserve Fund)</u>	<u>\$0</u>
Total	\$3,455

Matt went over the expenditures of FY 2020/2021 and the expenditures of FY 2021/2022 since July 1st. Matt suggested level funding for the other line items. He noted that Town Manager Tracy Yarlott-Davis is encouraging level funding for the FY2022/2023 budget. There was discussion. Tom Kahl suggested budgeting \$300 to assist the Hartford Salamander Team with technical assistance from the North Branch Nature Center (this year it is currently funded by an Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions Tiny Grant. The HCC agreed. Tom asked about reinstating the conservation fund. Matt responded that the HCC needs to come up with a list of projects to use the funds. The HCC agreed to work on a white paper to present the advantages and disadvantages of placing a conservation easement on the Hartford Town Forest and justifying reinstating the conservation fund appropriation. Matt noted that placing a conservation easement on the Town Forest which would likely cost between \$15,000-\$20,000. Angie Emerson made a motion to approve the HCC budget for fiscal year 2022/2023 to include the following:

Travel & Training	\$175
Materials and Supplies	\$200
Memberships	\$250
Advertising	\$180
Contracted Service (Green Up)	\$2,000
Forest Management	\$650
Hartford Salamander Team	\$300
<u>Conservation Fund (Reserve Fund)</u>	<u>\$3,000</u>
Total	\$6,755

The motion was seconded by Jon Bouton and approved 5 to 0.

8. Town Forest:

- a. Game of Logging: Tom Kahl reported that the Natural Resources Class at the Hartford Area Career Technology Center would like to use the Town Forest as a back-up site for the Game of Logging training in September. Jon Bouton made a motion to allow the Natural Resources Class to use the Town Forest for the training. The motion was seconded by Mary Hutchins and approved unanimously. Jon agreed to work with teacher Matt Dragon to identify trees that could be cut for the training.
- b. Memorandum of Understanding with the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association: Tom Kahl reported that the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association (UVMBA) submitted a Memorandum of Understanding to the Conservation Commission for partnering on projects in the Town Forest. There was discussion. Concerns were expressed about some of the proposed requirements of the Conservation Commission. Angie Emerson made a motion for the HCC to sit down with the UVMBA to discuss further. The motion was seconded by Mary Hutchins and approved 4 to 0 with Tom Kahl abstaining. Dennis Brown suggested getting input from the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Parks and Recreation Department.
- c. Compilation of Town Forest Integrated Management Plans: Angie Emerson reported that she will have a draft for the Conservation Commission to review at the October 4th Meeting.
- d. Recreation Management Plan. Matt Osborn reported that Department of Planning and Development requested getting this on the Selectboard agenda sometime in October. The HCC requested it to be after October 14th. Angie, Tom and Matt agreed to meet and develop the presentation. Matt agreed to send notices to adjacent property owners, other interested parties and to the Hartford List Serve.
- e. Trails Map & Trail Signs: Angie Emerson reported that some of the intersection markers in the Town Forest are missing. She asked if there are more markers. Tom Kahl responded yes. Angie volunteered to replace the markers. Tom stated that he will talk to Dana Hazen about the trail map changes.
- f. Trails Virtual Sign-Up: Tom Kahl reported that a few folks have signed up to do trail maintenance in the Town Forest and Hurricane Forest Wildlife Refuge.
- g. Wayfinding Signs. Matt Osborn reported that he heard back from VTrans about the amount of State right-of-way at the Route 4 intersections with Route 4 and Center of Town Road. He noted that Tom Kahl agreed to meet with Matt this week to measure the distance to ensure that the signs remain outside the State right-of-way.
- h. Story Walk and Scavenger Hunt Request: Jon Bouton reported that Story Walk and Scavenger Hunt went well.

9. **Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions (AVCC) Tiny Grant Program**: Matt Osborn reported that he contacted the North Branch Nature Center about necessary changes to process the invoice for work with the Hartford Salamander Team and is waiting to hear back. He agreed to follow-up.

- 10. Climate Action Plan Report:** Mary Hutchins reported that the Climate Action Plan was accepted by the Selectboard. They will discuss a resolution at their September 7th meeting.
- 11. Invasive Plants:** Tom Kahl reported that he joined Dana Hazen and Bill Musson of Redstart Forestry on invasive plant treatment at the David Chang Conservation Area. They also treated Japanese Knotweed at the Town Forest. Matt Osborn reported that Redstart was reimbursed for the cost of materials with the remainder of Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions Tiny Grant. Matt noted that he completed the required written report and the grant was closed-out. Tom noted that the Native Plant Trust requested permission to survey the David Chang Conservation Area for False Dragonhead. Permission was granted.
- 11. HCC Logo:** Matt Osborn reported that the Town doesn't have a current policy on developing a logo for Town Commissions. He suggested placing the item on the back burner until a policy is developed. The HCC agreed. He reported that the Parks and Recreation Department did not support the HCC using their logo or variation of it.
- 12. Announcements/Other Business:**
- a. Hartford Community Coalition Block Party: Matt Osborn reported that the Hartford Community Coalition is sponsoring the annual Block Party at Lyman Point Park. Tom Kahl responded that with Covid-19 rates increasing, he doesn't think this is a good time for large gatherings. The HCC agreed not to participate in this year's Block Party due to the recent upswing in Covid cases.
 - b. Wetlands Complaint: Matt Osborn reported that he contacted the Regional State Wetlands Specialist about a complaint from a resident who was upset about a property manager cutting down wetland vegetation. Matt noted that the State has jurisdiction over Class 2 wetlands, but not Class 3 wetlands. Matt reported that the Wetlands Specialist indicated that she will make a site visit. Matt noted that he gave the specialist the resident's contact information in case they want to talk to them or meet while doing the site visit. Matt agreed to keep the HCC and property owner apprised. Matt stated that if it wanted, the Town could develop regulations regarding Class 3 wetlands.
- 13. Next Meeting:** Tom Kahl reported that the next HCC meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 4th at 7:00 p.m.
- 14. Adjournment:** Mary Hutchins made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Angie Emerson and approved. The meeting was adjourned at 9:09 p.m.

15. Meeting Action Items:

- a) Matt agreed to inquire about the Town policy regarding providing an opportunity for a contractor to bid if they were not sent the RFP.
- b) A.J. to send the Timber Harvest RFP to Mary who will have it forwarded to a potential bidding logger.
- c) Angie Jon and Matt volunteered for the September 11th Source to the Sea clean-up.
- d) Matt will request the use of a truck from the Parks and Recreation Department for the Source to the Sea clean-up.
- e) Jon volunteered to donate trash bags for the Source to the Sea clean-up.
- f) The HCC agreed to work on a white paper discussing the advantages and disadvantages of a Hartford Town Forest conservation easement and justifying reinstating the conservation fund appropriation.

- g) Jon agreed to work with HACTC natural resource teacher Matt Dragon to identify trees that could be cut for their Game of Logging training.
- h) Angie, Tom and Matt agreed to meet and develop the presentation to the Selectboard on the Recreation Management Plan.
- i) Matt agreed to send notices to adjacent property owners, other interested parties and to the Hartford List Serve for the Recreation Management Plan Selectboard Meeting.
- j) Angie volunteered to replace the missing trail markers in the Town Forest.
- k) Tom stated that he will talk to Dana about the trail map changes.
- l) Tom agreed to meet with Matt to measure the distance to ensure that the wayfinding signs remain outside the State right-of-way.
- m) Katie should finish the maps for the next ten property owners of ranked parcels in Hartford.
- n) Matt agreed to work with the North Branch Nature Center regarding payment for services provided to the Hartford Salamander Team.
- o) Matt will follow-up about the resident wetlands complaint.