

Approved Minutes of the
Hartford Conservation Commission
October 2, 2023

Members Present: Chris Beetham, (8/7/27), Mary Hutchins, (11/4/23) Katie Mann (8/24/24) and chair Tom Kahl, (8/24/24).

Staff Present: Town Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: Ben Fletcher of the Hartford Salamander Team.

A hybrid Hartford Conservation Commission (HCC) Meeting in compliance of the Open Meeting Law was held on Monday, October 2nd 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.

1. **Approval of Minutes:** Tom asked if there are any changes to the draft minutes of 7/17/23. There were none. Tom stated that the HCC minutes of 8/28/23 are approved as written by unanimous consent.
2. **Public Comments:** Tom asked if there are any public comments. There were none.
3. **Partnership with the Hartford Salamander Team:** Hartford Salamander Team (HST) member Ben Fletcher was present to discuss a partnership with the HCC. He noted that the HST has been sponsoring a monthly meet-up series. He is excited about working with the HCC to cosponsor events and is interested in hearing what events the HCC is interested in. Tom noted that the HST has developed a strong following in Hartford and surrounding communities and has sponsored educational programs on topics such as salamanders, fungi and insects. He noted that the HCC agreed to assist the HST with \$300 to go toward programming. Tom added that he thinks it is wonderful that HST has had success engaging younger adults.

Regarding possible topics, Katie Mann noted that invasive plant control is high on the HCC list for 2024. Chris Beetham noted that after a wet summer he thinks a Town Forest trail evaluation should be undertaken. Katie stated that we could do a workshop on trail standards. Tom suggested holding an event in February introducing the many different ways that a person can participate in conservation stewardship. Others agreed. Ben added that community science could be a topic that could be expanded toward stewardship. Mary liked the idea and added that we could follow with a sample of projects for the various interests. Ben suggested thinking about broader goals before deciding on specific topics. Tom stated that HCC's role is to promote conservation. Matt noted that HCC could create a subcommittee to work with Ben on workshop topics. The HCC agreed. There was consensus to continue the discussion at the November 6th HCC meeting. Tom thanked Ben for attending the meeting.

4. **HCC Member Interests:** Matt noted that Tom was unable to attend the last meeting and wanted to give him an opportunity to comment about his interests. Tom responded that he would like to work with the Tree Board and the Hartford Garden Club on pollinator pathways. Chris Beetham suggested looking at interconnecting trails throughout Town. Katie suggested the importance of balancing positive projects to offset reactive projects that the HCC is working on. She used the pollinator project as being positive compared to invasive plant removal as being reactive. Others agreed.
5. **Fiscal Year 2024/2025 HCC Budget:** Matt noted that the HCC discussed the budget last month but agreed to continue discussion at this meeting. The following was the recommendation of Matt & Tom.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget</u>
Travel & Meetings	\$75
Advertising	\$100
Memberships	\$250
Materials and Supplies	\$605
Forestry	\$500
Contracted Serv. (Green-Up Day)	\$2,000
<u>Conservation Fund (Reserve Fund)</u>	<u>\$3,000</u>
Total	\$6,530

Mary Hutchins made a motion to approve the proposed FY 2024/2025 HCC budget as proposed. The motion was seconded by Chris Beetham and approved 4-0. Matt noted that the HCC will have to make a case to the Selectboard for including \$3,000 in the conservation fund since there haven't been any expenditures in the past few years.

6. **Climate Action Plan:** Tom reported that the Tree Board and volunteers removed Japanese Knotweed from a section of Lyman Point Park riverbank and had planted 14 trees from the Tree Board nursery at Maxfield Park last summer and 40+ indigenous shrubs last Saturday (9/30/23). The idea is to control the Knotweed and open the view of the White River while encouraging native vegetation to come back. Tom stated that this is an example of climate adaptive forestry and he would like to tie it in with the forest management work in the Town Forest and produce a HCC brochure. He offered to develop the draft brochure. The HCC liked the idea. Mary offered to assist with the brochure graphics.
7. **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association (UVMBA):** Matt noted that last year, the Town and the UVMBA established a MOU regarding work in the Town Forest. Since it was a first-time effort, the MOU was given a one-year time frame. The MOU has expired and the HCC and UVMBA need to review the MOU and decide if they want to continue the MOU and/or make changes to it. Matt suggested increasing the term of the agreement to two or three years. Chris offered to discuss this with the UVMBA Board. Matt suggested discussing at the 11/6 meeting. The HCC agreed.
8. **Town Forest Invasive Plants:** There was discussion regarding an invasive plant workday in the Town Forest. It was agreed to shoot for a May 18th workday.
9. **Moose Brook Trail Bridge:** Tom reported that civil engineer Tim Schaal designed the bridge improvements and then completed the work with the assistance of Wayne Hoisington, Bill Brown and Tom.
10. **Timber Harvest Clean-up:** Matt reported that he communicated to the Hartford Area Career and Technology Center Teacher Matt Dragon and County Forester A.J. Follensbee about leaving some of the stumps that were left from the timber harvest. Matt agreed to follow-up with them.
11. **Game of Logging Training:** Matt reported that Hartford Area Career and Technology Center Teacher Matt Dragon will be conducting the annual Game of Logging training for his students at the Town Forest. Matt noted that County Forester A.J. Follensbee agreed to mark the trees to be cut. Tom will work with AJ on safety postings of the area during the work and explaining the educational and environmental benefits of the training and clearing.

- 12. Safety Vests:** Matt reported that last year, the Conservation Commission purchased ten safety vests to be loaned to the public while recreating in the Town Forest and Maanawaka Conservation Area during hunting season. Seven of the vests were returned. It was noted that bow season is now underway and the vests should be made available. Katie offered to deliver the vests to the Town Forest. Matt will deliver the vests Maanawaka Conservation Area.
- 13. Bliss Road Class 4 Section:** Matt reported that Tom joined him on a site visit to the Class 4 section of Bliss Road with four neighbors who would hate to see the Class 4 section of Bliss Road upgraded to a Class 3 road. They are interested in converting the road to a trail. Since consensus of adjacent property owners is critical, the four neighbors will be reaching out to the greater neighborhood. Matt agreed to discuss with the DPW Director, Fire Chief and Police Chief. Matt also agreed to research the statutory requirements to change the road status. Tom will send the 9/20/23 meeting email minutes to the HCC.
- 14. Book “Our Better Nature”:** Matt reported that he has delivered most of the books to libraries and schools that requested a copy. Katie volunteered to deliver the book to the Hartford High School and the Hartford Area Career & Technology Center.
- 15. Book “Nature’s Best Hope”:** Matt reported that four libraries and four schools requested a copy of Ecologist/ Entomologist Doug Tallamy’s book “Nature’s Best Hope Young Person’s Edition”. Matt asked if he should order through a local bookstore or Amazon. The HCC responded a local bookstore if they are not much more expensive. Matt will order the books.
- 16. Memorial Tree:** Matt Osborn reported that there is an effort underway to plant a memorial Tree for former Conservation Commission chair Linda Wilson who served on the HCC from 2004-2011. Matt noted that Linda served as chair for several years and was instrumental in developing rural land use policy with the 2007 Town Plan, which was followed by major zoning changes in 2008. He asked the HCC if they would like to donate toward the tree. They agreed. Mary Hutchins made a motion to donate \$200 toward the tree. The motion was seconded by Tom and approved 4-0. Matt will make arrangements for the donation.
- 17. Announcements/Reports:**
 - a. AVCC Annual Summit: Tom reported that the Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions is holding their annual summit on Thursday, October 19th. Tom to confirm they still want an HCC participant on a panel discussing past Mini Grant projects.
 - b. State & Local Government Municipal Day: Tom reported that Local Government Day is Friday, October 20th.
 - c. Environmental Leadership Training: Matt reported that there are two sessions of environmental leadership training sponsored by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department this fall. The first is “From Science to Planning” and the second is “From Planning to Action.”
- 18. Next HCC Meeting:** Tom noted that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 6th at 7:00 p.m.
- 19. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.
- 20. Meeting Action Items:**
 - a. It was agreed to continue the discussion about 2024 educational programs at the November 6th meeting.

- b. The HCC will have to make a case to the Selectboard for including \$3,000 in the conservation fund.
- c. Tom will develop the draft brochure on climate adaptive forestry. Mary will assist with the brochure graphics.
- d. Chris will discuss the MOU with the UVMBA Board.
- e. It was agreed to continue discussion of the UVMBA MOU at the November 6th meeting.
- f. It was agreed to shoot for May 18th workday for invasive plant removal in the Town Forest.
- g. Matt agreed to follow-up with Matt Dragon and A.J. Follensbee about timber harvest clean-up. Tom will confirm safety procedures and educational postings with AJ.
- h. Katie will deliver the safety vests to the Town Forest.
- i. Matt will deliver the safety vests to the Maanawaka Conservation Area.
- j. Matt will discuss the conversion of the Class 4 section of Bliss Road to a trail with the DPW Director, Fire Chief and Police Chief.
- k. Tom will send the 9/20/23 Bliss Road meeting email minutes to the HCC.
- l. Matt will research the statutory requirements to change the road status.
- m. Matt will order the book “Nature’s Best Hope Young Person’s Edition” for the elementary schools and libraries.
- n. Katie will deliver the book “Our Better Nature” to the Hartford High School and Hartford Area Career & Technology Center.
- o. Matt will make arrangements for the memorial tree donation.
- p. Katie will revise the natural resource letters and give to Matt.
- q. Matt will mail the natural resource letters to property owners.

21. HCC Member Terms: Chris Beetham, (8/7/27) Sky Claud, (7/31/27) Mike Harris, (8/7/27) Mary Hutchins, (11/4/23) Ted Levin, (11/15/25) vice-chair Katie Mann, (8/24/24). and chair Tom Kahl, (8/24/24).