

Draft Minutes of the
Hartford Conservation Commission
November 1, 2021

Members Present: Jon Bouton, Mary Hutchins, Katie Mann, Lee Michaelides and chair Tom Kahl.

Staff Present: Sustainability Coordinator Dana Clawson and Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: Resident Ted Levin and Selectboard Liaison Dennis Brown.

A Conservation Commission Meeting was held on Monday, November 1st at 7:00 p.m. in Room 312 of the Hartford Town Hall at 171 Bridge Street, White River Junction. The meeting was also accessible remotely via MS Teams and several people participated that way. Chair Tom Kahl called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. Tom proceeded to read the Hybrid Meeting Script followed by roll call.

1. **Changes to the Agenda:** Tom Kahl asked if there are any changes to the agenda. Matt Osborn requested adding the Water Bottle Refilling Station Grant Program. The HCC agreed.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Tom Kahl asked if there are any changes to the Minutes of the October 4, 2021 HCC Meeting. There were no changes. Tom stated that the minutes are approved as written by unanimous consent.
3. **Hartford Climate Action Plan:** Sustainability Coordinator Dana Clawson was present to talk about the Climate Action Plan (CAP) and the formation of a Steering Committee to focus on implementation of the CAP. Dana noted that the CAP was adopted by the Selectboard in August. The Climate Advisory Committee (CAC) is now focusing on implementation of the CAP and is forming a Steering Committee. The CAC is interested in having a Conservation Commission member serve on the Steering Committee. He noted that the CAP is an ambitious plan that aims for the Town government to be net zero by 2027 and for the entire Town to strive toward being net zero by 2030. Dana noted that the first task of the Steering Committee is to put together a list of goals to accomplish in 2022 and present them to the Selectboard in February. Lee Michaelides volunteered to serve on the Steering Committee. The HCC agreed that Lee would be a good member and thanked him for volunteering. Tom Kahl thanked Dana for attending the meeting.
4. **New HCC Member:** Tom Kahl reported that he has been talking to independent nature writer Ted Levin about his interest in applying to serve on the Conservation Commission. Ted joined the meeting later in the evening. Tom noted that Ted recently moved to Hartford and previously served on the Strafford Conservation Commission.
5. **Town Forest Timber Harvest:** Tom Kahl reported that while discussing the Town Forest Recreation Management Plan at the 10/19 Selectboard meeting, resident Tim Schaal advised the Selectboard not to accept the terms of the timber harvest. He stated that the small amount of revenue generated by the timber harvest was not worth the disturbance to the recreational trails. He believes that any timber harvest could be less disruptive if it was performed in smaller increments by the HACTC natural resource class. Tom noted that Selectboard chair Dan Fraser suggested the item be discussed at a future Selectboard meeting. Dennis Brown agreed that it would be helpful discussing the timber harvest at a Selectboard meeting. Tom Kahl stated that he has prepared a draft response to Tim's comments and will distribute it to the HCC. Matt Osborn stated that it may be too late to resolve the issue for the timber harvest to occur this winter. He noted that A.J. Follensbee spoke with Long View Forest and they are willing to do the work in 2023. Jon Bouton responded that he would really like to see this move forward. The HCC agreed. Katie Mann noted that the HCC needs to remind the Selectboard of all the public outreach that the HCC did on the Forest Management Plan and timber

harvest stating that the HCC had done a lot for the process to be transparent. Matt agreed to see about getting the item on an upcoming Selectboard agenda.

6. Memorandum of Understanding with the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association: Tom Kahl reported that last week, Lee Michaelides, Matt Osborn and Tom had a zoom meeting with Liz Burdette, President of the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association (UVMBA) to discuss the draft Memorandum of Understanding between the Upper Valley Mountain Bike and the Conservation Commission. Tom noted that the conversation was very positive and that the result of the meeting was agreement on revisions. Matt noted that the Town Manager will have to approve the MOU and suggested adding a line for her signature. Katie Mann made a motion to recommend acceptance of the revised MOU between the Upper Valley Mountain Bike and the Conservation Commission. The motion was seconded by Lee Michaelides and approved 5 to 0. Tom will ask Liz to add a signature line for the Town Manager. Matt agreed to present the MOU to the Town Manager.

7. Town Forest:

- a. Recreation Management Plan. Tom Kahl reported that the Recreation Management Plan was presented to the Selectboard on October 19th and that the meeting went well. Tomorrow evening, the item is scheduled for the Selectboard to consider adoption. Matt and Tom agreed to attend the meeting.
- b. Wayfinding Signs. Matt Osborn reported that he met with DPW Assistant Director Jeremy Delisle to get his response to the proposed sign locations that Tom Kahl and Matt are proposing. Jeremy gave his preliminary approval to the locations and agreed to install the signs once the signs are obtained. Matt agreed to obtain approval to order the signs.
- c. Trails Maintenance: Tom Kahl reported that he sent thank you notes to the folks who signed up to do maintenance in the Town Forest and Hurricane Forest Wildlife Refuge. He reported that he received a thank you note for the HCC maintaining the HTF trails from grade schooler Gabriel Duffy.

Tom reported that he, Lee, and Matt had discussed leaf blowing with UVMBA President Liz Burdette and she commented that there are mixed feelings about leaf blowing among mountain bikers. There was discussion about the need for research on the effects of leaf blowing on trail conditions. Liz did have a question about potential cost. Katie agreed to talk with Vermont Center for Ecostudies and see if they could provide some sort of range of possible scope and costs.

- d. Trails Map: Tom Kahl reported that Dana Hazen will provide us with the G.I.S. files of the map. We will then have to find someone to make the changes. Tom suggested asking the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission to make the changes. Matt agreed to make the request.
- e. Conservation Easement: Since the HCC has a lot on its plate at this time, it was agreed to hold off on pursuing a conservation easement until the timber harvest is completed.
- f. HACTC Natural Resources Class: Jon Bouton reported that the Hartford Area Career Technology Center (HACTC) Natural Resources Class completed work removing beech saplings to allow other tree species to regenerate. It was agreed to erect signage in the area of the cutting to explaining the reasons for the work. Jon noted that there are a few cords of wood cut by the Natural Resources Class that is currently laying on the ground. The wood could either be left on the ground or removed from the site by the Natural Resources Class and processed for firewood. Matt Osborn noted that it is tricky issue giving away public resources. Jon stated that this is a learning

experience for the Natural Resources Class, and they are not charging for their work. The HCC agreed. Mary Hutchins made a motion to allow the Natural Resources Class to remove the downed trees and process the firewood off-site with Jon Bouton monitoring the removal to minimize disturbance. The motion was seconded by Jon Bouton and approved 5 to 0. Matt agreed to seek approval from the Town Manager.

8. **Maanawaka Conservation Area Annual Inspection:** Matt Osborn reported that the Upper Valley Land Trust conducted their annual inspection of the Maanawaka Conservation Area as part of their oversight of the conservation easement. There were no issues.
9. **Maanawaka Conservation Area Annual Posting:** Matt Osborn reported that it is time to post the Maanawaka Conservation Area noting that hunting and trapping are not allowed on the property. Lee Michaelides to assist Matt with the posting.
10. **HCC Budget Update:** Tom Kahl reported that Jon Bouton attended the Selectboard budget session to request reinstatement of the \$3,000 conservation fund. The Selectboard approved the request. Tom thanked Jon and Lee Michaelides for drafting a memo to the Selectboard.
11. **Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions (AVCC) Tiny Grant Program:** Matt Osborn reported that he followed up with the North Branch Nature Center (NBNC) about necessary changes to process the invoice for work with the Hartford Salamander Team and is still waiting to hear back. Tom Kahl agreed to contact the NBNC and Hartford Salamander Team to follow up on the status of payment and the report documenting the Hartford spring 2021 amphibian migrations.
12. **Wetlands Complaint:** Matt Osborn reported that he sent the Regional State Wetlands Specialist a follow-up e-mail about the wetlands complaint made by a resident who was upset about a property manager cutting down wetland vegetation. Matt hasn't heard back. He noted that the State has jurisdiction over Class 2 wetlands, but not Class 3 wetlands. Matt agreed to keep the HCC and the resident who made the complaint apprised.
13. **Announcements/Other Business:**
 - a. Green-Up Vermont Water Bottle Refilling Station Grant: Matt Osborn reported that he received an e-mail this afternoon about a grant to install a water bottle refilling station. He suggested applying to install one at the Town Hall. Dennis Brown stated that he thinks it is a great idea. The HCC agreed. Matt agreed to discuss the grant with the Town Manager.
14. **Next Meeting:** Tom Kahl reported that the next HCC meeting is scheduled for Monday, December 6th at 7:00 p.m.
15. **Adjournment:** Jon Bouton made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mary Hutchins and approved. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.
16. **Meeting Action Items:**
 - a. Lee volunteered to serve on the Climate Action Plan Steering Committee.
 - b. Tom agreed to distribute a draft response to Tim Schaal's comments on the timber harvest to the HCC.
 - c. Matt agreed to inquire about getting the timber harvest on an upcoming Selectboard agenda.
 - d. Matt agreed to present the MOU with the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association to the Town Manager.

- e. Matt and Tom agreed to attend the 11/2 Selectboard meeting to answer any questions on the Town Forest Recreation Management Plan.
- f. Matt agreed to obtain approval to order the wayfinding signs.
- g. Katie will talk with VCE and see if she can obtain any information about potential scope and costs for a study on the effect of leaf blowing on trails.
- h. Matt agreed to make the request to the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission to update the Town Forest trails map.
- i. Since the HCC has a lot on its plate at this time, it was agreed to hold off on pursuing a conservation easement until the timber harvest is completed.
- j. Matt agreed to seek approval from the Town Manager for the Hartford Area Career Technology Center Natural Resources Class to remove the trees that they cut in the Town Forest and process for firewood.
- k. Jon agreed to monitoring the removal of logs from the Town Forest to minimize disturbance.
- l. Lee agreed to assist Matt with the posting the Maanawaka Conservation Area.
- m. Tom agreed to contact the Hartford Salamander Team and the North Branch Nature Center about information that is needed for payment for services to the Hartford Salamander Team.
- n. Matt agreed to keep the HCC and resident who made the complaint apprised about a wetlands complaint.
- o. Matt agreed to discuss the Water Bottle Refilling Station Grant with the Town Manager.