

**Draft Minutes of the**  
Hartford Conservation Commission  
November 9, 2020

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

**Staff Present:** Planner Matt Osborn.

**Others Present:** Selectboard Liaison Emma Behrens.

A remote meeting of the Conservation Commission in compliance with the Vermont Open Meeting Law was held on Monday, November 9, 2020. Tom Kahl called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. Tom read the Open Meeting Law Script developed by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns.

1. **Additions/Changes to the Agenda:** Tom Kahl asked if there are any changes or additions to the agenda. There were none.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Tom Kahl asked if there were any changes to the minutes of October 5, 2020. There were no changes. Tom stated that the minutes are approved by unanimous consent as written.
3. **Forest Management Plan for Town Forest:** Tom Kahl reported that the Selectboard approved the Forest Management Plan at their November 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting. He thanked County Forester A.J. Follensbee, Jon Bouton and Matt Osborn for presenting. Matt reported that he changed the title page to include the Selectboard adoption date. Tom noted that A.J. plans to hold a few webinars this winter on forest management with Chittenden County Forester Ethan Tapper. Jon noted that A.J. will take the lead planning the workshops and Jon offered to assist A.J. Matt agreed to coordinate with A.J.
4. **Emerald Ash Borer:** Tom Kahl reported that he posted the Emerald Ash Borer flyers at the Town Forest, Hurricane Forest Wildlife Refuge and the Maanawaka Conservation Area. The HCC's consensus was that at this time no other EAB mitigation is needed as Jon Bouton noted that there are not many ash trees in the Town Forest.
5. **HCC Budget:** Matt Osborn reported that due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, department heads were instructed to submit three budget scenarios; flat, a 5% reduction and a 10% reduction. Interim Town Manager John MacLean advised going forward with the flat budget. The HCC budget, which is under the Planning Department's budget was presented to the Selectboard on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. Matt went through the following budget:

• Travel & Training	\$175
• Memberships	\$250
• Advertising	\$180
• Green Up Day Contracted Services	\$2,000
• Educational Materials	\$400
• Forest Management	\$650
• <u>Conservation Fund (Reserve Fund)</u>	<u>\$0</u>
Total	\$3,655

Matt noted that since March, there has been a town spending freeze that requires Town Manager and Finance Director approval of any expenditures.

Jon Bouton expressed his disappointment that the conservation fund is not being funded in the proposed budget. The HCC agreed. Jon noted that after taking out Green-Up Day funds, the HCC budget is only \$1,655.

Katie Mann asked what is the current balance of the conservation fund? Matt Osborn responded that it is in the \$90,000 - \$95,000 range, but noted the Town hasn't received the \$14,000 invoice from the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps for the summer trails crew.

Jon made a motion to recommend funding the conservation fund in the amount of \$3,000 in the 2021/2022 budget. The motion was seconded by Lee Michaelides and approved 6 to 0. Jon volunteered to write a memo justifying the request.

Matt noted that the revenues from the last two timber harvests (2005 & 2008) went into the conservation fund. Jon stated that the HCC should request that the revenues from the 2022 planned timber harvest go into the conservation fund.

## **6. Town Forest:**

a. Recreation Management Plan: Tom Kahl reported that a remote community meeting to present the Draft Plan and to get public input was held on October 21<sup>st</sup>. The main issues brought up by the public at the meeting were:

- I. Allow Class 1 e-bikes.
- II. Continue to allow pass through ATV's and snow machines.
- III. Create wayfinding signs off-site, and new trail maps and signage in the Town Forest.

There was discussion about allowing Class 1 e-bikes and consensus that a trial period like what is being done at the Boston Lot in Lebanon is appropriate. It was agreed to hold off on a decision until after the November 30<sup>th</sup> deadline for public comments.

There was discussion about the request to continue to allow ATV's and snow machine use and what trails would be most appropriate. It was agreed to continue the discussion.

Matt Osborn noted that there was a request for wayfinding signage to guide folks to the Town Forest and improved and updated trail signs in the Town Forest. Jon Bouton responded that wayfinding signs need to be small. Tom Kahl reported that Tim Schaal offered to create a new trails map that is more easily readable by removing the trails of the Hurricane Forest Wildlife Refuge while enlarging the Town Forest trails. The maps will be 11" x 17" instead of the existing 8 ½" x 11" maps. Tom also noted that Tim offered to supply laminated maps mounted on boards to be located throughout the Town Forest.

Matt agreed to update the HCC webpage with information on the Recreation Management Plan including the minutes and video of the October 21<sup>st</sup> meeting.

Tom noted that the Recreation Management Plan will likely go before the Selectboard in January or February 2021.

b. Boundary Painting: Jon Bouton reported that he painted the southern and western boundaries and hopes to continue painting in the coming months. Matt Osborn asked about the temperature range of the paint. Jon responded that he has applied the paint in cold weather before without incident,

but will check the paint label. Jon agreed to continue painting the boundary, and his intention was to complete before next spring when logging areas and trees will be marked

- c. Town Forest Knotweed: Matt Osborn reported that Dana Hazen treated the section of Japanese Knotweed along Reservoir Road. Dana plans to do more treatments in 2021.
  - d. Game of Logging Class: Jon Bouton reported that the Hartford Area Career Technology Center (HACTC) Adult Education Class “Game of Logging” was held on October 10<sup>th</sup>. Tom Kahl thanked Jon for marking trees, posting notices and closing trails for the class. Jon noted that 8-10 8” diameter trees were cut for the class. He reported that the HACTC has requested permission to hold two additional Level 1 training classes and one Level 2 training next year. Jon encouraged HCC members to view the area with cut trees and continue discussion next month.
  - e. Hartford High School Outreach: Tom Kahl reported that teacher Mary Bouchard had contacted Jon that she has a class that is interested in doing a project in the Town Forest. The HCC talked about possible projects such as establishing a pollinator garden or installing interpretative sign (e.g. at the vernal pools). Jon Bouton agreed to contact Mary to discuss a possible project.
  - f. Trail Leaf Blowing: There was discussion about the practice of leaf blowing of mountain bike trails in the Town Forest. For several years the local mountain bikers have leaf blown the trails in the fall and spring for safety reasons. Last fall and recently there have been concerns that it might encourage erosion. The HCC agreed to look at the impact of the practice. It was also agreed that any decision needs to be data driven and involve the mountain bike community.
7. **Natural Resource Landowner Outreach**: Tom Kahl reported that the last letter was mailed out to the second group of ten property owners. Tom asked if letters should go out to the next group of ten property owners. Jon Bouton responded that he would like to see the names of the next ten. Matt Osborn agreed to provide the information.
  8. **David Chang Conservation Area**: Matt Osborn reported that Dana Hazen informed him that Dana did treat invasive plants at the David Chang Conservation Area this fall. Dana will conduct additional treatments in 2021.
  9. **Maanawaka Conservation Area**: Matt Osborn reported that the Upper Valley Land Trust conducted the annual inspection to ensure that the conservation easement is being honored. Tom Kahl had hoped to join them, but their schedules did not work out. Matt noted that he conducted the annual posting of the property on Friday with his daughter. Matt stated that they removed about 20 ticks off their clothes. He suggested posting information about ticks at the kiosk. The HCC agreed. Matt volunteered.
  10. **Gift of Four Trees**: Jon Bouton reported that on October 11<sup>th</sup>, Jon, Tom and Katie joined Tree Board member Claire Forseth and planted the four trees donated by the Hartford Tree Board amongst the Japanese Knotweed along the White River in Lyman Point Park. The hope is that once the trees are established, they will shade out the Knotweed.
  11. **Climate Action Plan**: Mary Hutchins reported that the Climate Advisory Committee is focusing on soliciting individuals to serve on the eight working groups that have been established.

## 12. Announcements:

- a. Vermont Center for Ecostudies Collaboration: Katie Mann reported that her husband works at the Vermont Center for Ecostudies and they are interested in collaboration with the HCC if we have a project in mind. The HCC agreed to consider a project.

**13. Next Meeting:** Tom Kahl reported that the next HCC meeting is scheduled for Monday, December 7<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m.

**14. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

## 15. Meeting Action Items:

- a) Matt agreed to coordinate with A.J. about the winter forestry workshops.
- b) Jon volunteered to write a memo justifying the request to reinstate the conservation fund.
- c) Matt agreed to update the HCC webpage with information on the Recreation Management Plan update including the minutes and video of the October 21<sup>st</sup> meeting.
- d) Jon agreed to continue painting the Town Forest boundary.
- e) Dana plans to do more treatments of the invasive plants in the Town Forest and David Chang Conservation Area in 2021.
- f) Jon encouraged HCC members to view the area with cut trees by the Game of Logging class and continue discussion next month.
- g) Jon agreed to contact teacher Mary Bouchard about possible student projects in the Town Forest.
- h) The HCC agreed to look at the impact of the practice of leaf blowing on Town Forest trails and involve the mountain bike community.
- i) Matt agreed to provide information on the next ten highest ranked natural resource properties in Hartford.
- j) Matt volunteered to provide information on ticks at the Maanawaka Conservation Area kiosk.