

**Approved Minutes of the**  
Hartford Conservation Commission  
October 4, 2021

**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 Dennis Brown.

A Conservation Commission Meeting was held on Monday, October 4<sup>th</sup> 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 7:04 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. The following items were added:
  - a) Trail Maintenance
  - b) Bass in the Upper Hurricane Pond
  - c) Town Forest Site Visit
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Tom Kahl asked if there are any changes to the Minutes of the August 30, 2021 HCC Meeting. There were no changes. Tom stated that the minutes are approved as written by unanimous consent.
3. **Town Forest Timber Harvest:** Matt Osborn reported that once again Long View Forest was the lone bidder for the timber harvest. Matt noted that although the revised RFP changed from a lump sum bid to a mill scale bid, Long View didn't change their rates nor the cost of the new log landing. Matt stated that the revised RFP provided a bid alternate for utilization of a former log landing at the north end of the Town Forest property on Reservoir Road. Long View provided a bid of \$8,900 for the new log landing and access road. For the north landing and turnaround, Long View provided a bid of \$4,800. Matt expressed concern that the neighbors might oppose use of the north landing. Based on the mill tally provided by County Forester A.J. Follensbee, the net estimated revenue of the new landing would be \$290, while the net estimated revenue for the north landing would be \$4,390.

Jon Bouton thinks that the north landing and new turnaround will be more efficient delivering logs to the landing since it breaks it up into two areas for closer access. He stated that the north landing should be blocked off after the timber harvest to prevent vehicles from parking there. Utilizing the north landing will result in more revenue to the Town. He also noted that a new skid road will be constructed and be used as a replacement trail for the Moose Brook Trail. Regarding the impact on neighbors, Jon noted that the timber harvest will take place in the winter and the operation will only last three months. There will be no cutting of logs at the landing, just unloading and loading of logs.

Tom Kahl stated that the purpose of the timber harvest is to encourage resilience, improve wildlife habitat, demonstrate sustainable forestry and generate income for the conservation fund.

Jon Bouton made a motion to recommend acceptance of the Long View Forest bid and utilize the north landing with a new turnaround. The motion was seconded by Angela Emerson and approved 6 to 0. Matt will proceed with getting approval from the Administration for a contract with Longview. It was noted that the contract needs to be finalized soon for the timber harvest to occur this coming winter.

Tom Kahl suggested talking to residents of Reservoir Road personally and sending a letter to all Town Forest abutters. Tom also suggested updating the Selectboard on the timber harvest.

4. **Election of Vice-Chair:** Tom Kahl reported that HCC vice chair Dana Hazen submitted his resignation. As a result, a new vice chair will need to be elected. Angie Emerson suggested Katie Mann and asked her if she is willing to serve. Katie agreed. Angie made a motion to elect Katie vice chair. It was seconded by Jon Bouton and unanimously approved.
5. **Memorandum of Understanding with the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association:** Tom Kahl reported that Lee Michaelides submitted draft revisions to the Memorandum of Understanding between the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association (UVMBA) and the Conservation Commission. Discussion ensued. Lee agreed to revise the draft revisions and submit to chair Tom Kahl and staff member Matt Osborn. Tom agreed to contact, and he and Lee will then discuss with the UVMBA.

**6. Town Forest:**

- a. Recreation Management Plan. Matt Osborn reported that the Recreation Management Plan is scheduled to go before the Selectboard on Tuesday, October 19<sup>th</sup>. Angie, Tom and Matt agreed to meet and develop the presentation later this week. Matt also agreed to send notices to adjacent property owners, other interested parties and to the Hartford List Serve.
- b. Integrated Town Forest Management Plan: Angie and Jon said that they plan on presenting a draft next month.
- c. Wayfinding Signs. Matt Osborn reported that he will set up a meeting with DPW to get their response to the proposed sign locations that Tom Kahl and Matt are proposing.
- d. Trails Map: Tom stated that he received a text from Dana Hazen who said that he hoped to complete the last remaining map changes by October 16th.
- e. Trails Virtual Sign-Up: Tom Kahl reported that four folks signed up to do maintenance on in the Town Forest and Hurricane Forest Wildlife Refuge. He checked the town website and the sign-up is no longer posted. Tom will send thank you emails to the participants.
- f. Town Forest Project Site Visit: Jon Bouton reported that he led a tour of the Town Forest with representatives from the Vermont Department of Forest Parks and Recreation and the US Forest Service as a follow-up to the Town Forest Recreation Project from 2018. Jon noted that the project was very helpful in assisting the Town moving forward with recreation management in the Town Forest.
- g. Small Mouth Bass: Matt Osborn reported that Parks and Recreation Department Director Scott Hausler reported that he was contacted by a Town Forest user who expressed concern about small mouth bass in the Upper Hurricane Pond appearing to be unhealthy. The HCC concluded that there was nothing they could do.
- h. HACTC Natural Resources Class: 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 and the class has already met with A.J. Follensbee in the HTF about the new Management Plan. Tom

stated that Matt is looking for suggested projects. Jon Bouton suggested some clean-up work that he will coordinate that County Forester A.J. Follensbee. The HCC agreed.

- i. HACTC Game of Logging: Jon Bouton reported that the Hartford Area Career Technology Center completed their Game of Logging training at the Town Forest recently and 25 students received their certification.

**7. HCC Budget Update:** Matt Osborn reported that the Department of Planning and Development Services (DPDS) budget session with the Selectboard is scheduled for Tuesday, October 12<sup>th</sup>. Matt noted that the HCC budget falls under the DPDS budget. He also reported that DPDS Director Lori Hirshfield is not recommending reinstatement of the \$3,000 conservation fund since there is nearly \$90,000 balance. Jon Bouton stated that he will attend the budget session and give a pitch to the Selectboard to reinstate the conservation fund. He will also provide a memo to the Selectboard, a draft of which he prepared. Lee Michaelides agreed to work with Jon on the memo.

**8. 2021 Private Landowner Outreach:** Tom reported that Katie had completed draft letter and maps the previous day, and he thanked her for her efforts. Due to the length of this meeting this item was postponed until the November meeting when we will have more time for Katie to present and the HCC to adequately discuss.

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

**9. Announcements/Other Business:**

- a. Wetlands Complaint: Matt Osborn reported that he has not heard back from the Regional State Wetlands Specialist about a complaint from a resident who was upset about a property manager cutting down wetland vegetation. Matt agreed to follow-up.
- b. HCC Opening: It was agreed to begin recruiting for open HCC position. Lee and Jon both identified individuals that they would ask if they might be interested, and Dennis said that he would mention this at the October 5<sup>th</sup> Selectboard meeting.

**10. Next Meeting:** Tom Kahl reported that the next HCC meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 1<sup>st</sup> at 7:00 p.m.

**11. Adjournment:** Jon Bouton made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Angie Emerson and approved. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

**12. Meeting Action Items:**

- a. Matt will proceed with getting Administration approval of a timber harvest contract with Longview.
- b. Tom suggested talking to residents of Reservoir Road personally and sending a letter to all Town Forest abutters.
- c. Tom also suggested updating the Selectboard on the timber harvest.
- d. Lee agreed to revise the draft UVMBA MOU revisions and submit to chair Tom and Matt.
- e. Tom agreed to contact the UVMBA about the MOU.
- f. Angie, Tom and Matt agreed to meet and develop the presentation to the Selectboard on the Recreation Management Plan.

- g. Angie and Jon will work on a draft Integrated Town Forest Management Plan.
- h. Matt agreed to send notices to adjacent property owners, other interested parties and to the Hartford List Serve about the Selectboard meeting on the Recreation Management Plan.
- i. Matt will set up a meeting with DPW to get their response to the proposed wayfinding sign locations.
- j. Tom will follow up with Dana Hazen about the last remaining trail map changes.
- k. Jon will coordinate work with the Hartford Area Career Technology Center's Natural Resources class and County Forester A.J. Follensbee.
- l. Jon will attend the budget session with the Selectboard to request reinstating the conservation fund. Jon will work with Lee and provide a memo to the Selectboard about the conservation fund.
- m. Matt agreed to follow-up with the North Branch Nature Center on information needed for payment for services to the Hartford Salamander Team.
- n. Matt agreed to follow-up with the VT State Regional State Wetlands Specialist on the wetlands complaint.
- o. It was agreed to begin recruiting for open HCC position. Lee and Jon were going to contact individuals who had shown some interest and Dennis would mention the vacancy at the next Selectboard meeting.