

Approved Minutes of the
Hartford Conservation Commission
December 5, 2022

Members Present & Date their Term is Up: Jon Bouton (9/7/24), Angie Emerson (1/11/25), Mary Hutchins (11/4/23), Ted Levin (11/15/25), Katie Mann (2/26/23), Lee Michaelides (10/29/26) and chair Tom Kahl (8/24/24).

Staff Present: Town Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: Tim Stout, Anna Schaal, Jeff Arnold, Margaret Gray, Bonna Weiler, Mark Goodwin, Jennifer Waite, Jim Contois, William Martin, Robyn Mosher, Laura Simon, Parks and Recreation Commission Liaison Tom McCleary and Selectboard Liaison Mary Erdei.

A hybrid Hartford Conservation Commission (HCC) Meeting in compliance of the Open Meeting Law was held on Monday, December 5th 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. Forest Carbon Presentation:** Tim Stout, Principal of Northam Forest Carbon was present to discuss the ever-evolving state of forest carbon and what this means for Vermont landowners. Tim went through a powerpoint presentation with several links to resources. He will make the presentation available to anyone interested in it. Tim noted that in the past few years, managing forests for carbon sequestration and storage (CSS) to help mitigate climate change, improve forest health and other factors has gained promising momentum. Tim discussed the status of forest carbon programs available to landowners, ongoing training of forestry professionals on the principles of CSS to land use plans, recent research on the role CSS plays in helping New England states achieve their climate change goals and several specific management practices to enhance the rate of sequestration and storage in forests. Tim also talked about his experience in the Family Forest Carbon Program (FFCP) at his 175-acre farm, Jockey Hill Farm, in Shrewsbury, Vermont. Following the presentation, there was time for questions. At the end of the discussion, Tom thanked Tim for coming before the Conservation Commission.
- 2. Trailforks:** Anna Schaal of the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association (UVMBA) was present to discuss the posting of mountain bike trails on Trailforks by an unknown individual. Trailforks is a trails and mapping database that is free within 50 miles of one's home. There is a fee beyond 50 miles. In previous discussions the HCC had expressed concern that the platform might attract too many recreationalists from outside the Upper Valley to the Town Forest that could degrade the Town Forest's natural resources. Anna noted that the UVMBA took the posting down. She stated that someone could easily repost it and it is a pain to monitor. UVMBA uses Trailforks as a communication tool about trail status and for trail maintenance and trail closures noting it can be very effective tool. Anna stated that you can post events on Trailforks as well. She stated that if the HCC posted the Town Forest trails on Trailforks, UVMBA would be pleased. Anna added that if the HCC did post on Trailforks, someone would have to manage it. She offered the assistance of UVMBA. Tom asked the HCC what they think about posting on Trailforks. There was discussion followed by a 6-1 vote in favor of posting.
- 3. Changes to the Agenda:** Tom asked if there are any changes to the agenda. There were none.
- 4. Approval of Minutes:** Tom noted two corrections. He asked if there are any other changes to the draft minutes of 11/7/22. There were none. Tom stated that the HCC minutes of 11/7/22 are approved with the noted changes by unanimous consent.

5. **HCC Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget:** Tom reported that Planning and Development Director Lori Hirshfield presented her department's budget to the Selectboard on November 22nd. It included level funding for the HCC including the \$3,000 conservation fund appropriation. Tom attended the budget session but did not have to speak. Mary Erdei noted that the Selectboard will be working to finalize the budget in the coming weeks that will then go before the voters in March.
6. **Climate Action Plan:** Lee Michaelides noted that there was nothing new to report on the Climate Action Plan. He did note that Angie and Lee are working with the Tree Board on about dealing with invasive plants at Lyman Point Park. They are currently waiting to hear back from the Parks and Recreation Department.
7. **Town Forest Timber Harvest Update:** Matt reported that the Hartford Area Career Technology Center (HACTC) Natural Resources Class under the direction of Teacher Matt Dragon have been working in the Town Forest that last few weeks constructing a temporary parking area, improving the south log landing and building a temporary trail. The Department of Public Works (DPW) and AJ Follensbee have been working closely with the Natural Resources Class and they are pleased with the results. Matt noted that it is a win/win situation with the Natural Resources Class gaining experience and the Town saving money. He also noted that DPW hauled gravel to the site saving the Town additional money. Tom asked if the HCC could make a \$100 donation to the Natural Resources Class t-shirt fund. The HCC agreed. Matt will inquire.

Matt noted that the contract with Long View Forest should be signed tomorrow.

Matt reported that late last week, gravel was dropped off at the north log landing for Long View Forest to prep the landing. Two neighbors contacted him separately about their concern about the landing being turned into a parking lot. Matt assured the neighbors that at the end of the project, barriers will prevent the public from parking there. He also noted that one of the neighbors expressed concern about the anticipated noise from the logging operation.

8. **Hemlock Memorandum of Understanding:** Matt reported that he will be contacting Cover Home Repair next week about the MOU.
9. **Town Forest Timber Harvest Public Outreach:** Tom reported that County Forester A.J. Follensbee created a poster with QR codes about the timber harvest that will go up on the Town Forest kiosk. He stated that a public information walk with the logger and forester is scheduled for Saturday, February 4th at 10:00 a.m. He asked about methods to get the word out to the public. Jon suggested the Junction Arts & Media. Ted suggested Daybreak. Matt suggested the Valley News Calendar. The HCC agreed to look at other options, and Tom will follow-up.
10. **Integrated Town Forest Management Plan:** Tom noted that now that the Plan has been approved, it should be posted on the Town website. Angie agreed noting that is what the HCC agreed on a while ago. Matt agreed to have it posted on the website after the holidays.
11. **Hunting Safety and Public Awareness:** Matt reported that he obtained seven safety vests for the Town Forest and three safety vests for the Maanawaka Conservation Area and placed them there on November 11th. Tom thanked Matt and noted that he has seen the vests being used at both locations. Tom added that he found additional vests in the HCC supplies. Tom agreed to deliver the vests to Matt to be combined with the other vests.
12. **Pollinator Garden:** Tom reported that the Hartford Area Career Technology Center Natural Resources Class is interested in working on a pollinator garden at the Town Forest.

- 13. Kestrel Boxes:** Ted reported that two kestrel boxes will be installed at Sunrise Farm. Tom asked if the HCC would be willing to pay the \$130 for the boxes. The HCC agreed. Ted agreed to obtain an invoice.
- 14. Private Landowner Conservation Outreach:** Katie reported that she has letters and maps for five property owners. Matt agreed to send out the letters after the holidays.
- 15. Winter Education Events:** Ted stated that he is willing to lead a natural history walk in the Town Forest in January. January 14th at 10:00 a.m. was selected. Matt agreed to work on a poster and promote the event.
- 16. David Chang Conservation Area Boundary Markers:** Jon will get a quote for obtaining these markers.
- 17. Town Website:** Matt reported that the Department of Planning and Development will be working on the website after the holidays. He asked if there is interest in the HCC to establish a subcommittee to work on the changes. Lee and Katie volunteered. Lee asked if they could have access to make changes on the website. Matt responded that he didn't think that would be allowed.
- 18. HCC Terms:** Mary Erdei noted that an HCC member's term is up in February. Matt agreed and noted that Katie's term is up on February 26th. Tom stated that he hopes Katie will continue to serve. She said she is very busy and will decide in January.
- 19. HCC 2023 Meeting Schedule:** Tom asked the HCC if they had any comments about the proposed 2023 HCC Meeting Schedule. Being none, Tom stated that the schedule is accepted by unanimous consent.
- 20. Announcements:**
- a. Land Use Planning for Climate Change: Matt reported that there is a webinar "Land Use Planning for Climate Change" scheduled for Wednesday, December 7th at 1:00 p.m.
 - b. Vermont Invasive Management Day: Matt reported that he received an email request from Bernie Paquette of Jericho, Vermont requesting a letter of support for his effort to ask the State Legislature to declare a Vermont Invasive Management Day. Matt asked if the HCC would like to respond. Ted volunteered to look into. Matt agreed to forward the email to Ted.
- 21. Next Meeting:** Tom reported that the next HCC meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 9th at 7:00 p.m.
- 22. Upcoming Events:**
- a. Town Forest Natural History Walk: Saturday, January 14th at 10:00 a.m.
- 23. Adjournment:** Angie made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Ted and approved. The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.
- 24. Meeting Action Items:**
- a. Matt will inquire about providing the Hartford Area Career Technology Center with \$100 to go to their t-shirt fund for the work they completed in the Town Forest.

- b. Matt reported that he will be contacting Cover Home Repair next week about the Hemlock MOU.
- c. Tom will follow up on additional venues for Timber Harvest Public Outreach,
- d. Matt agreed to have the Integrated Town Forest Management Plan posted on the website after the holidays.
- e. Tom agreed to deliver the orange safety vests to Matt.
- f. Ted agreed to obtain an invoice for the two kestrel boxes and submit to Matt for payment.
- g. Matt agreed to send out the natural resource letters after the holidays.
- h. Ted stated that he will lead a natural history walk in the Town Forest on January 14th
- i. Matt agreed to work on a poster for the natural history walk and promote the event.
- j. Jon agreed to obtain a price for David Chang Conservation Area Boundary Markers.
- k. Lee and Katie volunteered to serve on a subcommittee to update the HCC webpage.
- l. Matt agreed to forward the email from Bernie Paquette of Jericho requesting a letter of support for Bernie's effort to ask the State Legislature to declare a Vermont Invasive Management Day to Ted.
- m. Ted volunteered to look at the request for a letter of support for the State Legislature to declare a Vermont Invasive Management Day and email the HCC.