

Draft Minutes of the
Hartford Conservation Commission
August 29, 2022

Members Present: Jon Bouton, Angie Emerson, Mary Hutchins, Ted Levin, Lee Michaelides and chair Tom Kahl.

Staff Present: Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: Ben Fletcher, Hartford Salamander Team, Ryan Rebozo Vermont Center for Ecostudies, Tom McCleary, Parks and Recreation Commission Liaison and Selectboard Liaison Mary Erdei.

A hybrid Hartford Conservation Commission (HCC) Meeting in compliance of the Open Meeting Law was held on Monday, August 29th 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. **Changes to the Agenda:** Matt Osborn noted that the June 6th minutes were included in the packets and should be on the agenda. The HCC agreed. Tom requested to include the Hartford Area Career Technology Center Game of Logging request. The HCC agreed.
2. **Partnering for Educational Events:** Ben Fletcher of the Hartford Salamander Team (HST) and Ryan Rebozo of the Vermont Center for Ecostudies (VCE) were present to discuss possible educational partnerships. Ben reported that the HST has been conducting monthly workshops including a workshop on insects yesterday. He suggested partnering with the HCC to share educational resources and to help pay speaker stipends. Tom noted that the HST has had great success since it began 2 ½ years ago. Ryan noted that VCE is a research-focused non-profit organization that has worked on community science that allows VCE to collect data and get people involved. He noted that VCE could use help with public outreach. Ben noted that HST uses venues in different towns although they use the Hartford Town Forest frequently. Tom noted that the HCC does educational events such as a winter ecology snowshoe and spring birding walk. Angie Emerson commented that education is an important part of HCC's work and they have produced a large amount of educational materials. Jon Bouton noted that he is impressed with HST work and that reach a different audience than the HCC. Ted suggested that HST look for grant funding. Ben noted that HST is not a non-profit organization and therefore not eligible for grant funding. Since the Town is eligible for grant funding, it was agreed to look at a possible grant for an educational series. Lee Michaelides suggested that Ben work on a proposal that will be discussed at the 10/3 HCC meeting. The HCC and Ben agreed. Tom thanked Ben and Ryan for attending the meeting.
3. **Approval of Minutes:** Tom asked if there are any changes to the draft minutes of 6/6 or 7/11. There were no changes. Tom stated that the HCC minutes of 6/6 or 7/11 are approved by unanimous consent.
4. **Source to the Sea Cleanup:** Matt Osborn reported that the Source to the Sea Clean-up is scheduled for Saturday, September 24th. He noted that the HCC participated last year. He asked if the HCC wants to participate this year. Tom stated that the HCC has a lot on its plate this fall. He suggested participating if someone is interested in taking the lead. Angie stated that she was interested in participating but is not able to take the lead. Matt volunteered to contact the White River Partnership about volunteer opportunities and get back to the HCC.
5. **Climate Change & the HCC:** Lee Michaelides reported that he met with Angie to discuss the Climate Action Plan (CAP) to see what the HCC might do to work on CAP implementation. Lee noted that there are several entities in Hartford working on carbon reduction, but Angie and Lee see an

opportunity to work on climate mitigation. They suggest taking the goals in the CAP and apply them to the three properties that the HCC manages (Town Forest, Maanawaka Conservation Area and the David Chang Conservation Area). The HCC agreed. Angie and Lee also suggested going beyond that. Ted noted that he is interested in education but acknowledged that climate change is a big issue at the Town level. Matt noted that the Hartford Energy Commission is taking the lead on the CAP. He sees the HCC and other commissions as potential partners working on implementation. He noticed that for some of the CAP actions, it isn't always clear what commission is responsible for implementation and that multiple commissions could be involved if they so choose.

Mary Erdei sees an opportunity for getting private businesses involved in implementation of the CAP. She wonders how the Town can get them involved.

There was HCC consensus that:

- The HCC needs to look beyond managing just Town owned land (e.g. Town Forest) and look at Climate Change's impact on all of Hartford's natural resources.
- The HCC's primary impact and climate mitigation goal is education to mobilize the efforts of others beyond the HCC's limited membership.

Angie suggested reaching out to the Tree Board since there appears to be some overlap with the HCC. Tom noted that he sees education as a key piece and that the HCC could work on tree plantings, invasive plant control and landowner education. He suggested reviewing the list of items that Angie and Lee put together and continue discussion at the October 3rd HCC meeting. The HCC agreed.

Angie suggested focusing on forest cover and volunteered to work with Lee on a forest cover summary for the October 3rd meeting and to send to other Town Commissions.

- 6. Integrated Town Forest Management Plan:** Angie reported that the HCC hasn't reviewed the Amphibian Inventory yet. She asked the HCC to review it and decide whether to include it in the integrated plan. Angie requested that if the HCC has comments about the Amphibian Inventory to her by September 9th. Ted Levin requested that Matt e-mail the Amphibian Inventory to the HCC. Angie noted that the HCC decided not to include the Wildlife Habitat Assessment. Angie stated that she would like one hard copy of the integrated plan. Tom suggested that we don't include earlier versions of the Forest Management Plan. The HCC agreed.
- 7. Town Forest Timber Harvest Update:** Matt reported that a draft contract has been prepared. Long View reviewed and agreed with it. Matt noted that Planning Director Lori Hirshfield reviewed the contract and contract documents and requested that a few of the items from the June 22nd site visit be firmed up. Matt noted that he is working with County Forester A.J. Follensbee and Logan Sears of Long View and hopes to have a signed contract by next week. Matt agreed to complete the contract.
- 8. Hemlock Memorandum of Understanding:** Tom reported that the MOU between the Town, Cover and Wright's Sawmill has to be worked out. He noted that Cover has a new Executive Director. Matt agreed to work with Cover.
- 9. Town Forest Timber Harvest Public Outreach:** Tom reported that there will be three public information events this fall in the Town Forest.
 - HCC sponsored Timber Harvest Information Series Workshop: Wednesday, September 14th at 5:00 p.m.
 - HCC sponsored Woodlot Management Series Workshop: Wednesday, September 21st at 5:00 p.m.
 - Sustainable Woodstock Carbon Storage Workshop: Wednesday, October 5th at 4:30 p.m.

Tom noted that many groups are beginning events with a Land Acknowledgement honoring Native Americans. He asked if HCC sponsored events should be doing the same. HCC agreed. Angie will research statement options to use.

10. **Town Forest Trail Maps:** Tom reported that Tim Schaal and the Boy Scouts continue to erect the new trail maps throughout the Town Forest. He noted that there are only two remaining to be installed.
11. **Game of Logging:** Tom reported that Matt Dragon of the Hartford Area Career Technology Center has requested permission to hold a Game of Logging class in the Town Forest the week of October 3rd. The HCC agreed and requested that the class fell trees that are marked for the timber harvest. Tom agreed to coordinate with A.J. Follensbee and Matt Dragon.
12. **Wetland Mapping:** Ted agreed to talk to the Hartford Salamander Team about the state wetlands mapping effort.
13. **Unauthorized Trail Use Remick Road Property:** Tom reported that there is a sign at the southern boundary of the Town Forest on Simonds Way informing the public that they are entering private property. He also reported Katie Mann contacted Anna Schaal of the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association (UVMBA) about a property owner's issue with mountain bikers riding without permission on his property. Anna agreed to look into it and post information about it on the UVMBA website. The property owner will be contacted by the HCC following a response from the UVMBA.
14. **Quechee Library Story Walk:** Ted reported that the story walk signs are still up in the Town Forest. It was agreed that the signs could remain as long into the fall as the Library likes.
15. **Private Landowner Conservation Outreach:** Matt reported that Katie is working on information for the planned mailing to the next ten property owners.
16. **David Chang Conservation Area Boundary Markers:** Jon will get a quote for obtaining these markers.
17. **Town Website:** Matt reported that staff is going through the new website to determine what needs to be fixed. Matt noted that later in the fall the HCC can take a look at making possible changes to the HCC webpage.
18. **Announcements:** There were no announcements.
19. **Next Meeting:** Tom Kahl reported that the next HCC meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 3rd at 7:00 p.m.
20. **Upcoming Events:**
 - a. Town Forest Information Series Workshop: Wednesday, September 14th at 5:00 p.m.
 - b. Town Forest Woodlot Management Workshop: Wednesday, September 21st at 5:00 p.m.
 - c. Next HCC Meeting: Monday, October 3rd at 7:00 p.m.
 - d. Carbon Storage Workshop: Wednesday, October 5th at 4:30 p.m.
21. **Adjournment:** Angie made a motion to adjourn. It was seconded by Ted and approved. The meeting was adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

22. Meeting Action Items:

- a. Ben Fletcher will work on an educational workshop partnership proposal between the HCC and Hartford Salamander Team to be discussed at the 10/3 HCC meeting.
- b. Matt volunteered to contact the White River Partnership about volunteer opportunities and get back to the HCC.
- c. Tom requested that the HCC review the list of Climate Action Plan items that Angie and Lee put together and continue discussion at the October 3rd HCC meeting.
- d. Angie will work with Lee on a forest cover summary for the October 3rd meeting and to send to other Town Commissions
- e. Angie requested that if the HCC has comments about the Amphibian Inventory to get comments to her by September 9th.
- f. Ted Levin requested that Matt e-mail the Amphibian Inventory to the HCC.
- g. The HCC requested that the HACTC Game of Logging class fell trees that are already marked for the timber harvest. Tom agreed to coordinate with A.J. Follensbee and Matt Dragon.
- h. The HCC agreed to contact the property owner about efforts to stop unauthorized use of trail on his property following a response from the UVMBA.
- i. Ted agreed to talk to the Hartford Salamander Team about the wetlands mapping project.
- j. Matt agreed to continue work on the Longview logging contract.
- k. Matt agreed to work on the Memorandum of Understanding for the hemlock between the Town, Cover Home Repair and Wright's Sawmill.
- l. Katie and Matt agreed to put together the information for the planned mailing to the next ten property owners about natural resources.
- m. Jon agreed to obtain a price for David Chang Conservation Area Boundary Markers.