

Draft Minutes of the
Hartford Conservation Commission
October 3, 2022

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

Staff Present: Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: Ben Fletcher, Hartford Salamander Team and Selectboard Liaison Mary Erdei.

A hybrid Hartford Conservation Commission (HCC) Meeting in compliance of the Open Meeting Law was held on Monday, October 3rd in Room 2 of the Hartford Town Hall located at 171 Bridge Street, White River Junction. Since chair Tom Kahl was attending remotely from Virginia, he asked vice-chair Katie Mann to chair the meeting. Katie 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:** Katie asked if there are any changes to the agenda. There were none.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Katie asked if there are any changes to the draft minutes of 8/29. There were no changes. Katie stated that the HCC minutes of 8/29 are approved as written by unanimous consent.
3. **Partnering for Educational Events:** As a follow-up to last month's HCC meeting, Ben Fletcher of the Hartford Salamander Team (HST) returned to discuss an educational partnership proposal with the HST. Ben reported that the HST has been conducting monthly workshops. He is inviting the HCC to work with HST to create the infrastructure for funding the workshops. To date, the HST workshop have not charged an admission and have not paid presenters. They would like to keep the events free and start paying speakers. They would like to team up with the HCC and apply for a grant for a speaker series. Matt Osborn noted that large grants (\$5,000 or more) require approval of the Finance Director, Town Manager and the Selectboard and require 4-6 week lead time. Small grants (under \$5,000) require approval of the Finance Director and Town Manager and require two weeks lead time for approval. Matt noted that there is scrutiny as to the amount of staff time necessary to prepare grant applications and to administer grants. He noted the Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions grant that the Town received. The \$300 grant required several hours of staff time to manage. Ted Levin suggested that HST consider applying for non-profit status or team up with one of the other Upper Valley non-profit organizations. Katie noted that although the Town is eligible for grants, a non-profit is eligible for more grants. Angie suggested that we try working with HST on an educational series and made a motion to that effect. It was seconded by Lee and approved 6-0. Tom noted that HST has done an excellent job in their short history. Ben thanked the HCC.
4. **Climate Change & the HCC:** Lee Michaelides reported that Resilient Hartford (RH) is interested in partnering with the HCC to pursue establishing a Food Forest at the Wilder School since there is a large expanse of lawn and is a visible public space. Matt noted that RH has been working on a Food Forest pilot project at Clifford Park in West Hartford and would like to expand to other parks in Hartford. It is part of the RH's goal of creating greater food security. Katie asked if the School District is on-board with the project. Matt responded that the idea just came up last week.

Lee noted that there is a funding source for urban tree canopy work through the Vermont Urban and Community Forestry Program and proposals are due December 30, 2022. The HCC agreed to pursue. Lee and Angie agreed to begin pursuing these grants and will coordinate with the Tree Board.

5. **Fiscal Year 2023/2024 HCC Budget:** Matt Osborn reported that the deadline for submitting department budgets came before tonight's HCC Meeting. He noted that Director Lori Hirshfield is

proposing level funding for the HCC including the \$3,000 conservation fund appropriation. She requested that the HCC provide justification for the conservation fund request which should include a list of projects. Tom asked what the deadline is for the documentation. Matt responded by the end of October, prior to the Selectboard budget workshop with the Department of Planning and Development. Lee suggested using the 2021 letter to the Selectboard regarding the conservation fund request. The HCC agreed. The following is the proposed HCC budget that was presented to the Town Manager.

<u>Category</u>	<u>2023/2024 Budget</u>
Travel & Meetings	\$175
Materials and Supplies	\$200
Memberships	\$250
Advertising	\$180
Contracted Serv. (Green-Up)	\$2,000
Forestry	\$650
<u>Conservation Fund (Reserve Fund)</u>	<u>\$3,000</u>
Total	\$6,455

Angie suggested using the conservation fund for a tree canopy project or as a local match. Jon suggested spending some time discussing what projects we intend to use conservation funds. Angie suggested putting the item on the 11/7 HCC agenda. The HCC agreed. Katie asked about the guidelines for use of the conservation fund. Matt responded that it is dictated by State Statute. He agreed to provide the HCC with guidelines.

6. **Integrated Town Forest Management Plan:** Angie reported that we have a binder with the Integrated Town Forest Management Plan. She thinks it is ready for the HCC to approve. Tom noted that the Plan needs to have the updated the Recreation Management Plan. He also noted that he has some edits. It was agreed to do final editing and consider approval of the Plan at the November 7th HCC meeting. Angie said that she will update the plan and pass it on to Lee for editing. After Lee is finished, he will send it to Katie for final formatting. Jon Bouton thanked Angie and acknowledged the amount of work Angie has done coordinating the effort. The HCC agreed.
7. **Town Forest Timber Harvest Update:** Matt reported that a site visit at the Town Forest was held on September 9th with Mike King of Long View Forest, County Forester A.J. Follensbee, Hartford Area Career Technology Center Natural Resources Teacher Matt Dragon, Department of Public Works (DPW) Director Jeremy Delisle and Highway Foreman Chip Haley to iron out details about parking and the log landings. Matt noted that DPW will deliver gravel to the site and the Natural Resources Class will do the improvements to the two log landings, the temporary trail bypassing the trailhead parking area and construction of a temporary parking area. This will reduce the cost to the Town. The Natural Resources Class will be working closely with DPW. Matt noted that Matt Dragon is excited about the project and working with DPW. Following the site visit, A.J. met with Mike King to mark the trees to be cut for the log landings.

Lee asked if the trailhead parking area kiosk would have to be moved. Matt responded no, but noted that signage for the temporary parking area will need to be developed. Tom volunteered to create a list of and wording for the temporary parking area and bypass trail signs.

Matt reported that he is finishing up revisions to the contract. Matt agreed to complete the contract.

8. **Hemlock Memorandum of Understanding:** Matt reported that the MOU between the Town, Cover and Wright's Sawmill has to be worked out. Wright's Sawmill is uncomfortable establishing a price

to process the wood when the work will be done this winter. 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 was a small turnout for the September 14th and 21st public information events at the Town Forest. He also reported that the October 5th Sustainable Woodstock Carbon Storage Workshop in the Town Forest was postponed and will be held at another location. The next Town Forest timber harvest workshop is scheduled for January.
10. **Town Forest Trail Maps:** Tom reported that he will check to see if the last two remaining trail maps have been installed by the Boy Scouts. Tom noted that the Town Forest Trails Map is not on the Town website. Matt stated that he will look into it.
11. **Game of Logging:** Tom reported that Matt Dragon of the Hartford Area Career Technology Center is conducting a Game of Logging class in the Town Forest this week. Ted noted that last month the HCC agreed that the class only fell trees that are marked for the timber harvest. Tom noted that the class also will be cutting trees for the two log landings and for the temporary parking area. Matt added that A.J. met with Long View Forest to identify trees to be cut for the log landings. Angie noted that she will touch base with Matt Dragon about the pollinator garden.
12. **Hunting Safety and Public Awareness:** Matt reported that he was contacted separately by two hunters who expressed concern about the number of people who walk in the Town Forest during hunting season and don't wear bright colors or put bright colors vests on their dogs. Matt read from the Upper Valley Trails Alliance website about their hunting safety posting. Matt suggested posting about it on the Hartford List Serv, Town website and posting at the Town Forest and Maanawaka Conservation Area kiosks. The HCC agreed. Mary Erdei reported that the Hanover Conservancy obtained orange vests and make them available to the public at busy trail locations during deer hunting season. Matt responded that we may have extra orange vests that we could make available for the Town Forest. He will check. Katie offered to deliver vests to the Town Forest.
13. **Town Forest Interpretive Signs:** Jon Bouton reported that he will make additional copies of the interpretive signs and post them in other locations in the Town Forest. He will also consider other signs interpreting the timber harvest and coordinate with A.J.
14. **Quechee Library Story Walk:** Jon reported that the story walk signs are still up in the Town Forest.
15. **Private Landowner Conservation Outreach:** Katie reported she will complete the maps for the mailing in November.
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 has been without an administrative assistant since the end of July. As a result, website work will have to wait until November and December. Matt noted that a new administrative assistant is scheduled to begin work in early November.
18. **Announcements:**
 - a. Trail Forks Posting: Tom reported that Anna Schaal of the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association contacted him to inform the HCC that a mountain biker posted the Town Forest trails

on the Trail Forks (mountain bike) website. Anna will attend the November 7th HCC meeting to discuss.

- b. Forest Carbon Discussion: Tom reported that Tim Stout offered to attend an HCC meeting and give a presentation on forest carbon. It was agreed to have Tim attend the December 5th HCC meeting.

19. Next Meeting: Katie reported that the next HCC meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 7th 7:00 p.m.

20. Upcoming Events:

- a. AVCC Conservation Climate Resilience Summit: October 15th 8:30 a.m. -3:30 p.m. in Fairlee.
- b. Next HCC Meeting: Monday, November 7th at 7:00 p.m.

21. Adjournment: Angie made a motion to adjourn. It was seconded by Ted and approved. The meeting was adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

22. Meeting Action Items:

- a. The HCC agreed to try working with the Hartford Salamander Team on an educational series.
- b. The HCC agreed to pursue a tree canopy grant through the Vermont Urban and Community Forestry Program
- c. Lee and Angie agreed to follow up with the Urban Tree Canopy grant program (proposals due 12/30/22) and coordinate with the Tree Board.
- d. The HCC agreed to discuss possible conservation fund projects at the November 7th meeting.
- e. Matt agreed to provide the HCC with the guidelines for conservation funds.
- f. Lee and Katie volunteered to do the final editing of the Integrated Town Forest Management Plan.
- g. The HCC agreed to use the 2021 letter to the Selectboard regarding the conservation fund request.
- h. Matt agreed to continue work on the Long View logging contract.
- i. Matt agreed to work on the Memorandum of Understanding for the hemlock between the Town, Cover Home Repair and Wright's Sawmill.
- j. Tom agreed to make a list and wording for temporary signs at the parking lot during the timber harvest.
- k. Matt agreed to look into getting the Town Forest Trails Map back up on the website.
- l. Angie agreed to touch base with HACTC Natural Resources Teacher Matt Dragon about the pollinator garden.
- m. Matt agreed to post information about hunting safety on the Hartford List Serv, Town website and posting at the Town Forest and Maanawaka Conservation Area kiosks.
- n. Matt agreed to look for orange vests to be available to the public at the Town Forest kiosk and Katie will deliver them.
- o. Jon agreed to make additional copies of interpretive signs and post them in the Town Forest. He will also consider other signs interpreting the timber harvest and coordinate with A.J. Follensbee.
- p. Katie and Matt agreed to put together the information for the planned mailing to the next ten property owners about natural resources.
- q. Jon agreed to obtain a price for David Chang Conservation Area Boundary Markers.
- r. The HCC agreed to schedule Anna Schaal of the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association on the November 7th HCC meeting to discuss information about the Town Forest trails being posted on the Trail Forks (mountain bike) website.
- s. The HCC agreed to schedule Tim Stout to the December 5th HCC Meeting for a presentation on forest carbon.