

Draft Minutes of the
Hartford Conservation Commission
July 11, 2022

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

Staff Present: Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: Remick Road resident David Brown and Selectboard Liaison Mary Erdei.

A hybrid Hartford Conservation Commission (HCC) Meeting in compliance of the Open Meeting Law was held on Monday, July 11th 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 7:04 p.m. and proceeded to read the Hybrid Meeting Script followed by roll call.

1. **Changes to the Agenda:** Tom Kahl noted that resident David Brown was present to talk about unauthorized trail use on his property. Tom suggested having that discussion first on the agenda. He also suggested adding discussion of the Integrated Town Forest Management Plan. The HCC agreed. Matt Osborn requested adding the Hurricane Hill Trail Run. The HCC agreed.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** It was agreed to postpone action on the draft Minutes of the June 6th until the next HCC Meeting.
3. **Unauthorized Trail Use:** Remick Road property owner David Brown was present to discuss unauthorized trail use on his property. David noted that a VAST Trail runs through his property and that there has been mountain bike use on it although non-winter recreational use is not allowed. He doesn't know who is responsible but would like to see the use stopped since he characterized it as a nuisance. Matt Osborn noted that the Conservation Commission would not condone recreational use on private property unless the property owner agrees to it. David believes that mountain bike use might originate in the Town Forest via Simonds Way. David noted that a number of years ago, he approached the Department of Public Works and asked them to gate Simonds Way. DPW denied the request. Tom suggested talking to DPW again. Matt suggested posting no trespassing signs on his property. Tom agreed to check to see if there is a sign posted in the Town Forest alerting users that they are leaving the Town Forest and entering private property. Katie Mann offered to contact Anna Schaal, the HCC's representative to the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association. Ted Levin suggested contacting VAST.
4. **Climate Action Steering Team (CAST):** Lee Michaelides reported that CAST is preparing a preliminary report to the Selectboard about implementing the recommendations in the Climate Action Plan. He noted that CAST has selected the following top three achievable priorities:
 - Insulating the Bugbee Senior Center
 - A new heating system for the Department of Public Works
 - Hybrid police cars

Tom asked about the HCC recommendations. Lee responded that the next step for CAST will be to examine the other Commission recommendations.

Angie Emerson suggested that the HCC have a discussion about the role that HCC should play in addressing climate change. The HCC agreed. Tom suggested working to implement the CAP recommendation "to increase the tree canopy in Hartford by 90 acres by 2030" and Jon noted that we may not have to plant trees, just stop mowing areas.

Lee also noted that street trees could make a difference particularly in areas with extensive pavement. Angie suggested going through the CAP and decide what to work on. Tom agreed and requested that HCC review the Trees and Greenspace chapter of the CAP for the August 29th HCC meeting. The HCC agreed. Lee and Angie agreed to review the entire CAP report and meet prior to the 8/29 meeting so they can highlight any other items potentially applicable to the HCC. Matt agreed to e-mail the HCC the Trees and Greenspace chapter.

Matt also agreed to send the HCC the Natural Resources Chapter in the Hartford Town Plan so the HCC could review any applicable items.

Lee noted that CAST has requested a map of town lands to identify potential solar sites. Matt responded that the map is currently being prepared by the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission.

5. **Wetland Mapping:** Angie reported that she posted on the Hartford List Serv information about the state wetlands mapping update and didn't receive any responses. Angie asked about whether to embark on effort to identify all wetlands in Hartford. Matt noted that the current wetlands mapping is outdated and is neither accurate nor comprehensive. Matt noted the importance of having good natural resource mapping for planning purposes. He stated that natural resource mapping including wetlands is important to the Planning Commission. Katie Mann noted that the biggest threat to wetlands is development. Matt noted that a vernal pool assessment was completed for the Conservation Commission in 2006. He agreed to send it to the HCC. Ted suggested talking to the Hartford Salamander Team about the effort and agreed to contact them.
6. **Town Forest Timber Harvest Update:** Tom reported that the Selectboard approved the Winter 2023 timber harvest at their June 14th meeting. He noted that on June 22nd, a site visit with A.J. Follensbee Logan Sears of Longview Forest occurred to go over changes to the timber harvest scope of work. He added that the amount of hemlock to be harvested was reduced by 50% and will only include hemlock for Cover Home Repair. Matt reported that he is working on the contract with Longview. He expects to complete it this month. Tom noted that the Memorandum of Understanding for the hemlock needs to be developed between the Town, Cover Home Repair and Wright's Sawmill. Matt agreed to work on it. Tom noted that mobilization for the timber harvest will take place in late fall.
7. **Town Forest Timber Harvest Public Outreach:** Tom reported that he drafted a proposal for a series of Town Forest site visits with three planned for woodlot management and five planned for harvest information. The HCC agreed to these public Outreach Meetings. Tom stated that he will work with A.J. Follensbee to select the dates. It was agreed to hold the September and June site visits on a weekday evening and the January, March and April site visits on a Saturday. Katie stated that Angie and Katie learned a lot from public comments during the recent timber harvest controversy. They suggest developing a permanent education initiative on forest management. Angie made a motion that the HCC develop a permanent educational series on healthy forest management. The motion was seconded by Jon Bouton and approved 6 to 0.
8. **Other Town Forest Items:**
 - a. Trail Maps: Tom reported that Tim Schaal and the Boy Scouts continue to erect the new trail maps in various locations throughout the Town Forest. He noted that they have a few more signs to erect.
 - b. Integrated Town Forest Management Plan: Tom reported that there is a 3/27/21 outline of the Integrated Management Plan. Angie asked the HCC if we should include the Bird Habitat

Assessment in the Plan. Tom responded yes and suggested adding the Bat Inventory but not the Wildlife Habitat Assessment. The HCC agreed. Matt noted that the Amphibian Inventory is the last remaining study that the HCC should review. Tom asked Matt to e-mail the Amphibian Inventory to the HCC. He requested that it be put on the August 29th HCC agenda. Angie suggested that we take what we have and decide what we need to update. The HCC agreed. Matt noted that many of the studies were done ten-plus years ago. Ted noted that a lot can change in ten years. Matt stated that the HCC can use the conservation fund to update any of the past studies.

9. Annual Hartford Community Coalition Block Party: Tom thanked Angie and Katie for setting up and staffing the HCC booth at the annual Block Party. Katie said it was good to be there and the biggest benefit was networking with other organizations. She thanked Jon and Lee for stopping by the booth.

10. Quechee Library Story Walk: Tom reported that the story walk was installed in the Town Forest and shows the relationship of trees below ground. The book is “Listen to the Language of Trees”. Jon will contact the Quechee Library to find out their schedule for having the story walk in place.

11. Private Landowner Conservation Outreach: Matt reported that he will put together the information for the planned mailing to the next ten property owners.

12. David Chang Conservation Area Boundary Markers: Jon will get a quote for obtaining these markers.

13. Town Website: Matt reported that the website went live a few weeks ago and there are some problems that may take time to correct. Staff is going through it currently to determine what needs to be fixed. Katie asked when the HCC may get the chance to make some changes to the HCC webpage layout. Matt responded in the fall. Angie noted that the HCC webpage doesn’t have any information on the Maanawaka Conservation Area or David Chang Conservation Area. It was agreed that both properties need to be added.

14. Announcements:

- a. Webinar “The Science of Sustainable Trail Design and Management”: Matt reported that American Trails is sponsoring a free webinar on Thursday, July 14th. He thinks it is a good topic for the HCC to learn about and hoped someone will be able to attend. Matt agreed to forward information about the webinar to the HCC.
- b. Hurricane Hill Trail Run: Matt reported that the annual Hurricane Hill Trail Run is scheduled for Saturday, July 23rd. Matt noted that the 10K run uses several trails in the Town Forest and that they always conduct a sweep of the trails to make sure there is no trail damage. The HCC consented to the race.

15. Next Meeting: Tom Kahl reported that the next HCC meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 29th at 7:00 p.m.

16. Upcoming Events:

- a. The Science of Sustainable Trail Design and Management: Thursday, July 14th at 1:00 p.m.
- b. Next HCC Meeting: Monday, August 29th at 7:00 p.m.

17. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:09 p.m.

18. Meeting Action Items:

- a. Tom agreed to check to see if there is a sign posted on Simonds Way alerting users that they are leaving the Town Forest and entering private property.
- b. Katie offered to contact the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association about illegal mountain biking on David Brown's property.
- c. As Angie suggested the HCC will begin discussing the role that HCC should play in addressing climate change.
- d. Tom requested that the HCC review the Trees and Greenspace chapter of the CAP for the August 29th HCC meeting.
- e. Lee and Angie agreed to meet prior to the 8/29 meeting to review the entire CAP Report for any items potentially applicable to the HCC.
- f. Matt agreed to e-mail the HCC the Trees and Greenspace chapter.
- g. Matt agreed to email the HCC the Hartford Town Plan Natural Resources Chapter.
- h. Matt agreed to send the Vernal Pool Assessment to the HCC.
- 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. It was agreed to hold the eight HTF Public Outreach Informational Sessions with the September and June Town Forest public outreach site visits on a weekday evening and the January, March and April site visits on a Saturday.
- m. The HCC agreed to develop a permanent educational series on healthy forest management.
- n. Tom asked Matt to e-mail the Amphibian Inventory to the HCC.
- o. Tom requested that the Amphibian Inventory be put on the August 29th HCC agenda.
- p. 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. It was agreed that information on the Maanawaka Conservation Area and David Chang Conservation Area needs to be added to the HCC webpage.
- s. Matt agreed to forward information about the sustainable trail design webinar to the HCC.