

Approved Minutes of the
Hartford Conservation Commission
February 5, 2024

Members Present: Chris Beetham, (8/7/27) Ted Levin, (11/15/25) vice-chair Katie Mann (3/20/27) and chair Tom Kahl (8/24/24).

Staff Present: Town Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: Selectboard Liaison Mary Erdei and Lee Michaelides.

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

1. **Approval of Minutes:** Tom asked if there are any changes to the draft minutes of 1/8/24. There were none. Tom stated that the HCC minutes of 1/8/24 are approved as written by unanimous consent.
2. **Public Comments:** Tom asked if there are any public comments. There were none.
3. **Conservation Educational Events:** Matt Osborn reported that Sky Claud was unable to attend the meeting this evening but sent Matt an email. She noted that she will be holding monthly young family outdoor education events. Sky will lead the next event on Sunday, March 3rd. More details will follow.
4. **2/4 Family Forest Frolic:** Katie Mann reported that the first young family outdoor education event at the Town Forest went well. Sky led the walk with assistance from Ben Fletcher of the Hartford Salamander Team. Over twenty people attended, and she thought the kids had a great time.
5. **Environmental Stewardship Mix & Mingle:** Tom reported that ten groups have agreed to participate in the February 29th event. Matt noted that the Junction Arts & Media (JAM) will be recording the event. Katie Mann reported that the Upper Valley Food Co-op agreed to provide baked goods. She suggested that the HCC provide cider and hot chocolate. Matt offered to take care of that. There was a discussion about the event promotion. Matt agreed to make a flyer, post at the libraries and Bugbee Senior Center, post on the Hartford List Serv, Town Facebook page, the Parks and Recreation Department weekly Constant Contact email, and the Valley News Calendar. Ted volunteered to post on the Upper Valley List Serv. Tom will contact the speakers about slides for the powerpoint presentation. Matt will bring his laptop and coordinate with the Bugbee Senior Center. The following organizations and their contact person have agreed to participate in the event:
 1. Vermont Institute of Natural Science – Jim Armbruster
 2. Vermont Center for Ecostudies – Jason Hill
 3. Hartford Garden Club – Clare Forseth
 4. Hartford Tree Board – Jeff Arnold
 5. Hartford Climate Action Committee – John Reid and Dana Clawson
 6. Hartford Salamander Team – Ben Fletcher
 7. White River Partnership – Christian Pelletier
 8. Upper Valley Land Trust – Cassie Bernyk
 9. Resilient Hartford -
 10. Conservation Commission – Mike Harris

6. **Kestrel Boxes:** Ted noted that he will be meeting Judy Barwood (Christian St.) to look at a possible location for the kestrel box on her property. Since it did not work out for the other property Mary Hutchins had in mind, there was discussion about other potential sites. Matt suggested a property on Costello Road and offered to contact the property owner. The HCC agreed.
7. **HCC Website:** Tom reported that he met with Matt last week to discuss changes to the HCC website. Matt noted that the Planning and Development Department has a new administrative assistant (Danielle Taylor) who will make the changes in the coming weeks following training.
8. **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association (UVMBA):** Matt reported that he heard back from Liz Burdette of the UVMBA about the MOU and she will obtain the required Certificate of Insurance (COI). Chris volunteered to contact Liz to follow up on the status of the COI. Once received, Matt will present the MOU to Hartford Town Manager John Haverstock for signing.
9. **Trail Inventory/List of Potential Projects:** Chris reported that we will have to wait until spring to do the inventory. Tom suggested including kiosk roof to the list since the cedar shakes have extensive moss on them. Chris reported that he gave an update of the Town Forest at the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association Annual Meeting. Chris asked about the possibility of the UVMBA sponsoring mountain bike rides at the Town Forest. It was agreed to discuss at the 3/4 HCC Meeting.
10. **Town Forest Invasive Plants:** Katie reported that the invasive plant workday in the Town Forest to treat honeysuckle and garlic mustard is scheduled for Saturday, April 20th. Tom pointed to the HCC display of brochures that includes invasive plants and alternatives to invasive plants.
11. **Town Forest Interpretive Signs:** Tom reported that he has put together interpretive signs to be erected in several locations in the Town Forest. He asked Matt if the signs could be laminated. Matt responded yes and agreed to laminate eight signs. Tom will then post the signs on the Town Forest kiosk and where trails enter harvested areas.
12. **Hartford Area Career & Technology Center (HAC&TC) Natural Resources Class:** Tom reported that the HAC&TC class did clean-up work in the Town Forest during the fall. Matt reported that Natural Resources teacher Matt Dragon is currently on leave.
13. **Amphibian Trapping Permit:** Matt reported that he emailed Jon Bouton about assisting Chris with the application for a permit. Chris responded that he hadn't heard from Jon. Tom offered to follow-up.
14. **Natural Heritage Walk:** Ted reported that despite the cold temperatures, eighteen people turned out for the walk in the Town Forest. He thinks it should be an annual event. The HCC agreed.
15. **Long-term Conservation:** Tom pointed to the Linking Lands Alliance (LLA) map that was displayed in the room. The map along with other LLA maps were donated to the HCC by former HCC member Karen Douville. The map shows connected forests and the varying degree of importance for our region. Tom noted that in 2023, the State Legislature passed Act 59, the Community Resilience and Biodiversity Protection Act (CRBPA). The goal of the Act is to conserve 30% of Vermont lands by 2030 and 50% by 2050. Conservation is defined as an area with permanent protection from conversion. The Act has three categories
 - Ecological Reserve Area
 - Biodiversity Conservation Area

- Natural Resource Management Area

There are two components of the Act: a conservation inventory report and the conservation plan.

Tom asked if the HCC should contact property owners about conservation in the most important corridors. The HCC agreed. Tom will work with Matt to identify properties.

- 16. Bliss Road Class 4 Section:** Matt reported that last month he met with Bliss Road resident Steve Cary to discuss options for the Class 4 section of Bliss Road. Matt researched Orrizonto Road, a former Class 4 road that was discontinued in the late 1990s by the Selectboard and replaced with a recreational easement. Matt will be discussing the possible conversion of the Bliss Road Class 4 road to a trail with the DPW Director, Fire Chief and Police Chief to get their input.
- 17. HCC Award:** Matt reported that Planning and Development Director Lori Hirshfield reviewed the draft description of the HCC award program. Lori had a few thoughts. She thinks nominations should be open to the public. She questioned whether a plaque for the Conservation Commission should be placed in the Town Hall when there are more than a dozen other commissions. Mary Erdei suggested talking to Town Manager John Haverstock about it. Matt agreed.
- 18. Pollinator Pathways:** Katie reported that she and Sky have selected the plants for the pollinator garden at the White River School and the Quechee Garden Club will provide the White River School with \$200 to pay for the pollinator garden seeds. Matt reported that Resilient Hartford agreed to establish a pollinator garden at the Clifford Park Food Forest in West Hartford.
- 19. Announcements/Reports:**
 - a. 2024 HCC Meeting Schedule: Matt went over the 2024 HCC Meeting Schedule noting he reviewed for potential conflicts with holidays. The HCC agreed to accept the proposed meeting schedule.
 - b. HCC Officers: Tom noted that the April HCC meeting is the time to elect officers. Tom stated that he has served as chair since 2019 and would like someone else to take on the position.
- 20. Upcoming Events:**
 - a. **Environmental Stewardship Mix & Mingle:** Bugbee Senior Center Thursday, 2/29 at 6:00 p.m.
 - b. **Family Forest Frolic:** Sunday 3/3
 - c. **Election of HCC Officers:** Monday, 4/1
 - d. **Town Forest Invasive Plant Removal:** Saturday, 4/20.
 - e. **Hartford Town Forest Salamander Meander:** Saturday 4/27.
 - f. **Green Up Day:** Saturday 5/4.
 - g. **Hartford Town Forest Bird Walk:** Saturday 5/18.
- 21. Next HCC Meeting:** Tom noted that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, 3/4 at 7:00 p.m.
- 22. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 8:44 p.m.
- 23. Action Items:**
 - a. Sky will lead the next young family outdoor education (Family Forest Frolic) event on Sunday, March 3rd.
 - b. Matt offered to provide cider and hot chocolate at the Environmental Stewardship Mix & Mingle event.

- c. Matt agreed to make a flyer, post at the libraries and Bugbee Senior Center, post on the Hartford List Serv, Town Facebook page, the Parks and Recreation Department weekly Constant Contact email, and the Valley News Calendar for the Mix & Mingle event.
- d. Ted volunteered to post on the Upper Valley List Serv for the Mix & Mingle event.
- e. Tom will contact the speakers about slides for the powerpoint presentation for the Mix & Mingle event.
- f. Matt will bring his laptop and coordinate with the Bugbee Senior Center for the Mix & Mingle event.
- g. Ted will meet with Judy Barwood (Christian St.) to look at possible locations for the kestrel box.
- h. Matt will contact a property owner of a large parcel on Costello Road for the second kestrel box.
- i. Planning and Development Department administrative assistant Danielle Taylor will make changes to the HCC webpage following website training.
- j. Chris volunteered to contact Liz Burdette of the UVMBA to follow up on the status of the Certificate of Insurance.
- k. Once the Certificate of Insurance is received, Matt will present the Memorandum of Understanding with the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association to Hartford Town Manager John Haverstock for signing.
- l. Matt agreed to laminate the forest interpretive signs for the Town Forest.
- m. Tom will post the interpretive signs in the Town Forest.
- n. Tom offered to follow-up with the amphibian trapping permit with Jon Bouton. Tom will work with Matt to identify properties important to Hartford's forest blocks.
- o. Matt will be discussing the possible conversion of the Bliss Road Class 4 road to a trail with the DPW Director, Fire Chief and Police Chief to get their input.
- p. Matt agreed to discuss with Town Manager John Haverstock about the HCC Awards Program.

21. HCC Member Terms: Chris Beetham, (8/7/27) Sky Claud, (7/31/27) Mike Harris, (8/7/27) Mary Hutchins, (10/30/27) Ted Levin, (11/15/25) vice-chair Katie Mann (3/20/27) and chair Tom Kahl (8/24/24).