

Approved Minutes of the
Hartford Conservation Commission
May 6, 2024

Members Present: Chris Beetham, (8/7/27) Mary Hutchins, (10/30/27) Tom Kahl (8/24/24) vice-chair Mike Harris, (8/7/27) and chair Katie Mann (3/20/27).

Staff Present: Town Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: None.

A hybrid Hartford Conservation Commission (HCC) Meeting in compliance of the Open Meeting Law was held on Monday, May 6th in Room 2 of the Hartford Town Hall located at 171 Bridge Street, White River Junction. Chair Katie Mann called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and proceeded to read the Hybrid Meeting Script followed by roll call.

1. **Approval of Minutes:** Katie asked if there are any changes to the draft minutes of 4/1/24. There were none. Katie stated that the HCC minutes of 4/1/24 are approved as written by unanimous consent.
2. **Public Comments:** Katie asked if there are any public comments. There were none.
3. **Changes to the Agenda:** There were no changes to the agenda.
4. **Conservation Educational Events:** Katie reported that the White River School showcase event is scheduled for Thursday, May 16 from 6:00 -8:00 p.m.
5. **Wilder Dam- Great River Hydro (GRH) Relicensing:** Matt Osborn reported that the Town submitted a letter to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) regarding the Wilder Dam relicensing application. The license is for a 40-year period. Comments on the application are due May 22nd.
6. **Kid's Pollinator Garden Prep Outing:** Katie reported that due to heavy rains on May 19th, the Pollinator Garden planting at the White River School had to be postponed until June 2nd.
7. **Green-Up Day:** Matt reported that the weather cooperated and there was a very good turnout for the May 4th Green-Up Day. He noted that there were a lot of businesses and organizations that participated this year. Matt will tally the results and report back at the 6/3 HCC Meeting. Matt thanked HCC members who helped out with Green-Up Day.
8. **Kestrel Boxes:** Matt reported that he sent a property owner a letter requesting permission to install the kestrel box on their property but didn't hear back from them. He showed Ted Levin the parcel and Ted thought it was an excellent location for a Kestrel box. Matt suggested that a HCC member reach out to the property owner. Tom suggested asking Ted. Matt agreed to send the property owner information to Ted.
9. **HCC Website:** Matt reported that administrative assistant Danielle Taylor has been working on the changes to the HCC webpage. Tom noted that he is still listed as chair of the HCC. He requested that staff update the recent changes in HCC officers.
10. **4/20 Salamander Meander (Vernal Pool Walk):** Chris reported that Steve Faccio of the Vermont Center for Ecostudies led the Salamander Meander walk at the Town Forest. A total of 35 people attended including adults and children. Chris stated that the traps were set the night before. Several

yellow spotted salamanders were caught and later released. He noted that young and old seemed to have a good time.

11. **4/27 Town Forest Invasive Plant Removal Event:** Katie reported that although there was a small turnout, it was a productive outing. A bunch of invasive honeysuckle was removed. There is more to do and Katie suggested that if we get a lot of volunteers for the 6/8 Trails Day to send out a small crew to continue the work. The HCC agreed.
12. **Trail Inventory/List of Potential Projects:** Chris reported that several folks are meeting on Wednesday, May 8th to scout potential trail projects for the 6/8 Trails Day event. Chris reported that Bill brown and Wayne Hoisington replaced a bridge on Bill's Trail. Tom suggested replacing the kiosk roof shingles with a metal roof that would last longer. The HCC agreed. He volunteered to lead the project. He also noted that the South Side Trail needs re-blazing with white paint. Tom volunteered to oversee the barbecue. Matt will obtain the food for the barbecue. Chris and Mike said they will help out on Trails Day.
13. **Forestry Workshops:** Tom reported that he attended a workshop in Hanover that the HCC joined forces with the Hanover and Lyme Conservation Commissions to promote. The workshop was "Declining Biodiversity in Upper Valley Forests". The last workshop will be held on May 22nd and focus on invasive plants. Tom noted that we haven't had much success generating interest in our forestry workshops in the Town Forest. He will discuss with the other towns to see if there is interest in visiting the Town Forest to see the results of the timber harvest. It was agreed that if there is interest, to hold the event the week of July 8th or July 22nd.
14. **Long-term Conservation:** Mike noted that he suggested working with the Environmental Law Clinic at the Vermont Law and Graduate School on a landowner conservation toolbox. Mike will be meeting with a law professor next week to discuss. Tom noted that there is a pinch point for wildlife crossing Route 4 for wildlife moving the Town Forest area to the Quechee Lakes Section 5. Matt and Tom met to look at parcel maps. It was agreed to hold off contacting property owners until the landowner conservation toolbox is completed.
15. **Bliss Road Class 4 Section:** Matt reported that he conducted a site visit on the Class 4 section of Bliss Road with Planning & Development Director Lori Hirshfield last week. He is scheduled to meet with the DPW Director, Fire Chief and Police Chief later this week to get their input on the possible conversion from a Class 4 road to a trail.
16. **HCC Award:** Matt reported that he spoke with Town Manager John Haverstock about the HCC Award proposal. John requested that Matt prepare a memo describing the proposal which he will then discuss with the Selectboard chair and vice-chair.
17. **Hartford Community Coalition Annual Block Party:** Mike reported that he will request a table at the Block Party. He also agreed to follow-up on the Conservation Commission offer to help with the composting part of the event, similar to what the HCC did last year.
18. **Ottauquechee Trail Maintenance Request:** Matt reported that he was contacted by Quechee resident Sheila Armen about gaining assistance to maintain the section of trail between Deweys Mills Road and Old Quechee Road. There was discussion about the state of the trail. Mike volunteered to meet with Sheila to find out more about the trail.

19. Announcements/Reports:

- a. National Park Service: Katie reported that the National Park Service has funding to purchase lands adjacent to the Appalachian Trail corridor.
- b. New Owner of Quechee Lakes Corporation: Mike reported that Mountain Streams is the new owner of the Quechee Lakes Corporation. They have land holdings in Quechee and plan to start building spec homes on platted lots this summer.

20. Upcoming HCC Events:

- a. **Hartford Town Forest Bird Walk**: Saturday 5/11.
- b. **Family Forest Frolic**: Sunday 5/11.
- c. **White River School Showcase Event**: Thursday, 5/16.
- d. **White River School Pollinator Garden Workday**: Sunday, 6/2.
- e. **Trails Day**: Saturday 6/8.

21. Next HCC Meeting: Katie noted that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, 6/3 at 7:00 p.m.

22. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

23. Action Items:

- a. Sky will lead the next young family outdoor education (Family Forest Frolic) event on Saturday, May 11th.
- b. Katie will lead a planting of the White River School pollinator garden on 6/2.
- c. Matt will tally the results and report back at the 6/3 HCC Meeting.
- d. Matt agreed to send the Costello Road property owner information to Ted for a possible kestrel nesting box site.
- e. Tom requested that staff update the chair and vice-chair positions on the HCC webpage.
- f. If we get a lot of volunteers for the 6/8 Trails Day to send out a small crew to continue the invasive plant removal work.
- g. Tom volunteered to lead the kiosk roof replacement project.
- h. Tom noted that the South Side Trail needs reblazing with white paint.
- i. Tom volunteered to oversee the Trails Day barbecue.
- j. Matt will obtain the food for the barbecue.
- k. Chris and Mike agreed to help out on Trails Day.
- l. Tom will discuss with other towns to see if there is interest in visiting the Town Forest to see the results of the timber harvest.
- m. Matt is scheduled to meet with the DPW Director, Fire Chief and Police Chief later this week to get their input on the possible conversion from a Class 4 road to a trail.
- n. Chris reported that several folks are meeting on Wednesday, May 8th to scout potential trail projects for the 6/8 Trails Day event.
- o. Chris plans to develop a list of projects and prioritize them.
- p. Mike will coordinate with the Environmental Law Clinic at the Vermont Law and Graduate School regarding a conservation toolbox.
- q. Matt agreed to prepare a memo to Town Manager John Haverstock about the HCC Awards Program for discussion with the Selectboard chair and vice-chair.
- r. The HCC agreed to help with composting at the Hartford Community Coalition Block Party and to have an educational booth at the event and Mike will confirm with the Coalition
- s. Mike volunteered to meet with Sheila Armen to find out more about the Ottauquechee Trail between Deweys Pond Road and Old Quechee Road.

22. 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).