

Approved Minutes of the
Hartford Conservation Commission
August 26, 2024

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

Staff Present: Town 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, August 26th in Room 2 of the Hartford Town Hall, 171 Bridge Street in White River Junction, Vermont. Katie Mann called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. and proceeded to read the Hybrid Meeting Script followed by roll call.

2. Approval of Minutes: Katie asked if there are any changes to the draft minutes of 7/1/24. There were none. Katie stated that the minutes of 7/1/24 are approved as written by unanimous consent.

3. Public Comments: Katie asked if there are any public comments.

- a. Possible Educational Partnership: Ben Fletcher of the Hartford Salamander Team (HST) was present to discuss a possible educational partnership between the Conservation Commission and the HST. He also suggested teaming up with other organizations such as the Vermont Center for Ecostudies, Upper Valley Food Co-op, Junction Arts & Media and the Main Street Museum. He suggested holding movie nights and include a speaker for a post film discussion. He also suggested educational walking excursions beginning at the Upper Valley Food Co-op. The HCC liked both ideas. Ben noted that he is looking for participation from the HCC and could use assistance finding facilitators and speakers. He stated that HST doesn't have a budget but noted that there are grant opportunities. Matt Osborn suggested contacting the Hartford Energy Commission, Climate Action Steering Team and Resilient Hartford. Ben concluded by reporting that there is a HST meet-up at Kilowatt Park on Sunday, 9/8 at 10:00 a.m. Katie thanked Ben for attending the meeting. It was agreed to continue discussion about partnership opportunities.

4. David Chang Conservation Area (DCCA) Erosion: Matt reported that he held a site visit with Kelly Stettner of the Ottauquechee Natural Resources Conservation District to look at the erosion. Kelly suggested looking at some erosion control for the steepest area (dogwoods, shrub willows, speckled alder) and some taller floodplain species to help shade the lower sections and cool the water and hold that soil. She also suggested some taller trees as well as lower-growing shrubs that can help with bank stabilization/flood resilience. She added that some evergreens could be included to maintain shade over the winter. Kelly noted that there are plenty of invasive plants on the property including purple loosestrife, Oriental bittersweet and black swallowwort. She suggested getting a handle on the invasive plants sooner than later. Matt reported that Ron Rhodes of the Connecticut River Conservancy was unable to attend the site visit but noted that planting trees and shrubs might help.

Ted Levin suggested letting the river run its course but attack the exotic plants. He suggested talking to an aquatic biologist. Matt agreed to pursue. Katie thinks it is a good idea to plant trees for shading the river. She suggested inquiring about hiring a contractor to treat the invasive plants. Matt agreed to pursue.

5. **Pollinator Gardens:** Katie reported that on August 17th, seedlings were planted at the White River School Pollinator Garden and they came in very well. Katie and Sky will do more work in the garden this fall.
6. **Source to the Sea Cleanup:** Matt reported that the Connecticut River Conservancy is once again sponsoring the annual fall river clean up on September 27 and 28th. The White River Partnership is participating as well and will focus on public access areas. There was discussion and consensus that the HCC should participate on Saturday, September 28 from 9:00 a.m. to noon. Katie suggested Watson Park and Lyman Point Park. She volunteered her family to paddle from the Hartford Village Bridge to Lyman Point Park and pick up trash along the way. Chris offered to lead a group to clean up around the West Hartford Bridge and Clifford Park. Matt agreed to contact the White River Partnership about disposal of trash. He also agreed to prepare a flyer and promote the event.
7. **Town Forest Bridge Safety:** Chris suggested installing chicken wire on non-snowmobile bridges in the Town Forest as a safety measure. Katie wondered if chicken wire is installed on bridges, will it hold debris and trap moisture. Matt suggested a pilot project on one or two bridges to see how it works. The HCC agreed. Chris will follow-up.
8. **Town Forest Parking Lot Concern:** Matt reported that he received a complaint from a Town Forest user/neighbor who is concerned about suspicious activity at the parking lot. Matt suggested that the person notify the Police Department. He also asked the HCC keep tabs on it. Ted responded that he visits the Town Forest often and hasn't witnessed anything suspicious.
9. **7/9 Forestry Walk:** Chris reported that twenty people attended the forestry walk with County Forester A.J. Follensbee on July 9th. Mary Erdei reported that she suggested that some of the ARPA funds be used to plant tree species in the Town Forest that are amenable to climate change. Katie reported that she has seen deer exclusion enclosures as a means of encouraging preferred species that deer eat. Mary noted that the Hanover Conservation Commission has been conducting research on Balch Hill. Katie volunteered to contact them about it.

Matt reported that the Town Manager has requested a site visit to the Town Forest with A.J. Follensbee and the Selectboard to learn about forest management.

Katie reported that there is a group of German exchange students who are interested in forest management and may be looking for service project ideas. Mike suggested contacting the organization Standing Trees.

10. **Long-term Conservation:** Mike noted that classes at the Vermont Law and Graduate School start next week. He will be reaching out to his colleague about working with students on a land conservation toolbox.
11. **HCC Awards:** Matt reported that the Town Manager and Human Resources Director have concerns about the HCC proposed Awards Program. In response to those concerns, Matt suggested limiting the award to individuals and not groups as well as foregoing a plaque in the Town Hall. The HCC agreed. Matt will revise the memo to the Town Manager.
12. **HCC Website:** Chris and Katie agreed to get comments on the HCC webpage to Matt by Wednesday, September 11th.

13. Ottauquechee Trail Maintenance: Mike reported that he reached out to Quechee resident Sheila Armen about her interest in getting help maintaining the Ottauquechee Trail. Since they had recently completed maintenance work, they agreed to touch base in the fall.

14. Announcements/Reports:

- a. Commission Stipend: Mary Erdei reminded HCC members that if they would like to accept a meeting stipend, they need to contact Human Resource Director Paula Nulty and fill out paperwork.
- b. HCC Bylaws: Matt reported that last month, Mary Erdei suggested looking at the HCC bylaws to see if changes are needed. Matt volunteered to review the bylaws and pass them on to Katie and Mike to review then discuss with the HCC at the October 7th meeting.
- c. HCC Opening: Katie noted that Tom Kahl decided not to seek reappointment to the HCC so there is a current opening. It was noted that it was listed in the Town commission openings posting recently. Matt will notify Holly Henderson who had expressed an interest in joining HCC.

15. Upcoming HCC Events:

- a. Composting Workshop: Wednesday and Thursday, 8/28 & 29.
- b. Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions Annual Meeting (Remote): Thursday, 9/5 noon
- c. Family Forest Frolic: Saturday 9/14, 10:00 a.m.
- d. Source to the Sea Clean-up: Saturday, 9/28, 9:00 a.m.
- e. Hartford Community Coalition Block Party: Friday, 10/18 at 3:30

16. Next HCC Meeting: Katie noted that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, 10/7 at 7:00 p.m.

17. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

18. Action Items:

- a. It was agreed to continue discussion about the educational partnership with the Hartford Salamander Team.
- b. Matt agreed to contact an aquatic biologist about the erosion problem at the David Chang Conservation Area.
- c. Matt agreed to contact a contractor to treat the invasive plants at the David Chang Conservation Area.
- d. Katie and Sky will be working on the White River School Pollinator Garden this fall.
- e. The HCC will do a clean-up workday on the White River on Saturday, September 28th.
- f. Matt agreed to contact the White River Partnership about disposal of trash from the event.
- g. Matt agreed to create a flyer and promote the event.
- h. The HCC agreed to keep tabs on the Town Forest parking lot.
- i. Chris agreed to follow-up on a pilot project to install chicken wire on 1-2 non-snowmobile bridges in the Town Forest as a safety measure.

- j. Katie volunteered to contact the Hanover Conservation Commission about research on Balch Hill on deer and vegetation.
- k. In September, the Selectboard will hold a site visit to the Town Forest with County Forester A.J. Follensbee to learn about forest management.
- l. Sky will lead the next young family outdoor education (Family Forest Frolic) event on Saturday, September 14th.
- m. Mike will be reaching out to his colleague at the Vermont Law and Graduate School about working with students on a land conservation toolbox.
- n. Chris and Katie agreed to get comments on the HCC webpage to Matt by Wednesday, September 11th. Once Matt receives the HCC website comments, he will submit to Administrative Assistant Danielle Taylor who will make the changes.
- o. Matt agreed to revise the memo to Town Manager John Haverstock about the HCC Awards Program for discussion with the Selectboard chair and vice-chair.
- p. The HCC agreed to have a booth at the 10/18 Hartford Community Coalition Block Party.
- q. Matt volunteered to review the bylaws and pass them on to Katie and Mike to review and then discuss with the HCC at the October 7th meeting.
- r. Matt will notify Holly Henderson about the HCC opening.

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