

Approved Minutes of the
Hartford Conservation Commission
November 4, 2024

- 1. Members Present:** Chris Beetham, (8/7/27), vice-chair Mike Harris (8/7/27), Holly Henderson (10/14/28), Mary Hutchins, (10/30/27), Ted Levin, (11/15/25) and chair Katie Mann (3/20/27).

Staff Present: Town Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: Sarah Kelly, Dartmouth College and Selectboard Liaison Mary Erdei.

A hybrid Hartford Conservation Commission (HCC) Meeting in compliance of the Open Meeting Law was held on Monday, November 4th 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 and introductions. A welcome was extended to new HCC member Holly Henderson.

- 2. Approval of Minutes:** Katie asked if there are any changes to the draft minutes of 10/7/24. There were none. Katie stated that the minutes of 10/7/24 are approved as written by unanimous consent.
- 3. Public Comments:** Katie asked if there were any public comments. There were none.
- 4. Educational Partnerships:** Dartmouth College research scientist and geographer Sarah Kelly was present to talk about educational opportunities working with Dartmouth College. Sarah and her students are currently working with students on a culvert inventory in West Hartford. The focus is on monitoring ecosystem health and nature-based solutions to address flooding. Sarah is looking for ideas for future projects. She noted that they are considering working with Resilient Hartford on their goal to enhance the riparian buffer at Clifford Park and are looking for other ideas as well. Sarah noted that Dartmouth has a small grant program to assist communities with projects. Matt agreed to send the HCC Sarah's contact information.
- 5. David Chang Conservation Area (DCCA):** Matt reported that Dana Hazen of Redstart offered to donate his time and only charge for the cost of the herbicides to treat the invasive plants at the DCCA (purple loosestrife, Oriental bittersweet and black swallowwort). The work will take place next spring.
- Matt noted that several folks recommended planting trees along the riverbank to help shade the river. Ted suggested seeking input from an aquatic biologist. Matt agreed to pursue. It was agreed to look at opportunities to obtain trees and plant them in the spring. Katie offered to contact the White River Partnership about the "Trees for Streams" program. Katie noted that the Natural Resources Class at HAC&TC could help with the planting.
- 6. Pollinator Gardens:** Katie reported that they planted asters at the White River School Pollinator Garden. Matt reported that Resilient Hartford planted a 30' x 50' pollinator garden at the Clifford Park Food Forest.
- 7. Tree Tubes:** Katie reported that A.J. Follensbee recommends obtaining 50 tree tubes to protect seedlings in the Town Forest harvested area from deer browse. She reported that the cost is \$3-4 each. Matt volunteered to contact A.J. to see if it is too late.
- 8. Forest Family Frolic:** Katie reported that the next event is scheduled for Saturday, November 9th at 10:00 a.m.

- 9. Game of Logging Class:** Katie reported that the Hartford Area Career & Technology Center annual chainsaw training took place at the Town Forest recently. However, with a new Natural Resources Class instructor, there was a breakdown in communication. A.J. and Matt will contact the new teacher about the process.
- 10. Safety Vests:** Matt reported that he delivered two safety vests to the Town Forest and two to the Maanawaka Conservation Area. Katie reported that three more vests that were donated by the Vermont Center for Ecostudies were delivered to the Town Forest. Matt reported that he has been posting notices regularly on the Hartford List Serv about safety during hunting season.
- 11. A.J. Follensbee Transferring to Northern Orange County and Southern Caledonia County:** Matt reminded that A.J. will be taking a position with the Forest Parks and Recreation Department leaving his position in Windsor County. Matt noted that A.J. has done so much for the Town and Conservation Commission including updating the Forest Management Plan, overseeing the timber harvest and holding workshops on forest management. He suggested chipping in and obtaining a gift card for A.J. as a token of appreciation for all that he has done for us. The HCC agreed. Donations can be given to Matt and he will obtain the gift card. Katie suggested creating a deadline of November 15th to get donations to Matt.
- 12. Maanawaka Conservation Area Update:** Matt reported that on Friday, he did the annual posting of the Maanawaka Conservation Area. He stated that about 4 or 5 of the plywood backings for the signs will need to be replaced next fall. Mike agreed to cut them if the wood is provided. Matt reported that he cleaned up the trailhead area that was overgrown with vegetation. Matt stated that since HCC member Angie Emerson moved away, we need a volunteer to maintain the Hazen Trail. Katie suggested posting on the Hartford Listserv. Matt agreed. Matt reported that there is a new leaner close to the trailhead. He will seek an opinion of how best to deal with it. Ted noted that there are great spring wildflowers on the property. Katie suggested holding a HCC walk next spring.
- 13. HCC Awards:** Matt reported that Town Manager John Haverstock approved the HCC Award Program. He noted that Mary Hutchins and Sky volunteered to serve on the subcommittee. Katie suggested that Sky and Mary provide a report at the December meeting.
- 14. HCC Website:** Chris, Katie and Holly agreed to meet to discuss changes to the HCC webpage.
- 15. HCC Bylaws:** Matt reported that he made revisions to the 1993 HCC Bylaws. Katie suggested that Mike and her work with Matt on the revisions and complete a draft by February and present them to the HCC.
- 16. Announcements/Reports:**
- Vermont Recreational Trails Grant:** Chris reported that Vermont Recreational Trails Grant has a preapplication submission deadline of December 6th and final application submission deadline on January 31st. Matt noted that there is a 20% local match requirement. Chris stated that the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association might be able to assist with the local match. Holly noted that in-kind labor might be eligible as well. Matt suggested developing a list of possible projects and have a project ready to seek grant funding next year. The HCC agreed. Matt noted the internal review process that requires approval of the Finance Director, Town Manager and the Selectboard. He suggested consideration of an accessible trail like the one constructed by the Upper Valley Trails Alliance at the Marion Cross Elementary School in Norwich. The HCC agreed to consider.

17. Long-term Conservation: Matt reported that he presented the draft contract with the Vermont Law and Graduate School for a land conservation toolbox to Town Manager John Haverstock last week. He is waiting to hear back from him. Mike stated that he will contact the Vermont Law and Graduate School to see if they have enough time to complete the project this fall or to wait until the spring semester.

18. Upcoming HCC Events:

- a. Family Forest Frolic: Saturday 11/9, 10:00 a.m.
- b. Annual Winter Natural History Walk: Ted stated that we should talk about setting up a date for the winter natural history walk in the Town Forest. The HCC agreed. It was decided to hold the event on Saturday, 1/25 at 8:00 a.m.

19. Next HCC Meeting: Katie noted that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, 12/2 at 7:00 p.m.

20. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

21. Action Items:

- a. Matt agreed to send the HCC Sarah Kelly's contact information.
- b. Matt agreed to pursue input from an aquatic biologist about the bank erosion at the David Chang Conservation Area.
- c. Katie offered to contact the White River Partnership about the "Trees for Streams" program.
- d. Sky will lead the next young family outdoor education (Family Forest Frolic) event on Saturday, November 9th.
- e. Matt volunteered to contact A.J. to see if it is too late to install the tree tubes.
- f. Donations for A.J. Follensbee can be given to Matt by November 15th and he will obtain the gift card.
- g. A.J. and Matt will contact the new HAC&TC Natural Resources teacher about the process to do work in the Town Forest.
- h. Mike agreed to make sign backings for the Maanawaka Conservation Area if the wood is provided.
- i. Matt agreed to post on the Hartford Listserv about a volunteer to do trail maintenance on the Hazen Trail.
- j. Matt will seek an opinion of how best to deal with the leaning tree near the Hazen Trail trailhead.
- k. Katie suggested holding a HCC walk next spring at the Maanawaka Conservation Area.
- l. Sky and Mary will provide a report at the December meeting about the HCC Awards Program.
- m. Matt agreed to email Sky and Mary the revised memo to the Town Manager.
- n. Katie, Mike and Matt will work on the revisions to the HCC Bylaws and complete a draft by February to present to the HCC.
- o. Katie, Chris and Holly agreed to meet to discuss changes to the HCC webpage.
- p. Mike will contact the Vermont Law and Graduate School to see if they have enough time to complete the project this fall or to wait until the spring.

22. HCC Member Terms: Chris Beetham (8/7/27), Sky Claud, (7/31/27), Mike Harris, vice-chair (8/7/27), Holly Henderson, (10/14/28), Mary Hutchins, (10/30/27), Ted Levin, (11/15/25) and Katie Mann, chair (3/20/27).