

**Approved Minutes of the**  
Hartford Conservation Commission  
January 6, 2025

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

**Staff Present:** Town Planner Matt Osborn.

**Others Present:** Mary Erdei, Selectboard Liaison.

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

1. **Approval of Minutes:** Katie asked if there were any changes to the draft minutes of 12/2/24. There were none. Katie stated that the minutes of 12/2/24 are approved as written by unanimous consent.
2. **Public Comments:** Katie asked if there were any public comments. There were none.
3. **Educational Partnerships:** Matt Osborn reported that he heard from Natural Resources teacher Dan Gibson of the Hartford Area Career & Technology Center (HAC&TC) that he is unable to attend tonight's meeting. Matt noted that he attended the Town Forest site visit with Dan and Holly Henderson on December 12<sup>th</sup>. Dan showed Holly and Matt the trees that the Natural Resources Class cut to see if the Natural Resources Class could haul some of the cut trees out of the forest using low impact logging practices for them to process. HCC member Holly Henderson who was unable to attend tonight's meeting sent out an email prior to the meeting providing the option of allowing Dan to remove some of the cut trees from the site or as an alternative ask Dan could reach out to private landowners participating in the current use program. Ted Levin responded to ask Dan to reach out to private landowners instead. Katie asked if there is public information on current use participants in Hartford. Matt responded yes. He suggested postponing a decision until Dan could participate in the discussion. The HCC agreed.
4. **Tree Tubes:** Mike Harris reported that he picked up about 40 tree tubes donated by the Nature Conservancy west of Rutland. This adds to the 29 tree tubes donated by the Black River Action Team. Katie reported that she reached out to former County Forester and HCC member Jon Bouton. Jon volunteered to make poles and help with the installation.
5. **Family Forest Frolic:** Sky reported that the next Family Forest Frolic event is scheduled for Saturday, January 11<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 a.m at the Town Forest. Katie said she would help promote the event.
6. **Maanawaka Conservation Area Update:** Matt reported that Wilder resident and former Hartford Tree Warden Brad Goedkoop volunteered to help maintain the Hazen and Backwater Trails. Matt noted that the parent of a boy scout had expressed interest in taking care of the Hazen Trail as well.
7. **David Chang Conservation Area (DCCA):** Matt reported that he will schedule a site visit with Dartmouth Professor, Aquatic Biologist and former HCC member Celia Chen in the spring to get her opinion about the bank erosion.
8. **Long-term Conservation:** Mike reported that the staff member leading the project at the Vermont Law and Graduate School left the position. Mike will contact the School to see about students working on the land conservation toolkit during the spring semester.

9. **HCC Budget:** Matt reported that in December, the Selectboard asked Town department heads to make cuts to their proposed budgets. Planning and Development Department Director Lori Hirshfield responded by cutting the \$3,000 conservation fund request. Matt noted that there is currently a balance of \$111,000 in the conservation fund reserve account and that by statute, the fund is restricted on what it can be used for. It was agreed to request funding for the conservation fund next year.
10. **HCC Awards:** Mary reported that Sky and she will meet to discuss and make recommendations at a future meeting.
11. **HCC Website:** Katie reported that Chris and Katie completed their review of the HCC webpage and submitted changes to Planning & Development Administrative Assistant Danielle Taylor. Katie is scheduled to meet with Danielle in late January.
12. **HCC Bylaws:** Matt reported that Katie, Mike and he made revisions to the HCC Bylaws. Matt asked Mike for his opinion on the HCC compensation issue and the Selectboard change to the Bylaws. Mike came up with some language. Matt will make the revisions, send the revised draft to Katie and Mike before presenting the draft bylaws to the HCC to consider. Matt noted that there is a fourteen-day notice requirement before the HCC can take action on the bylaws.
13. **Ottauquechee Trail Maintenance:** Mike reported that he will be attending a meeting tomorrow evening on the subject. Katie suggested that Mike let Holly Henderson know about the meeting. Mike agreed.
14. **HCC Environmental Stewardship Mix & Mingle:** Katie reported that the HCC decided to hold another Mix & Mingle event on Friday, March 7<sup>th</sup> to tie in with the White River Junction First Friday event. It was agreed to inquire about use of the Hotel Coolidge for the event and if that isn't available to contact the Bugbee Senior Center. Matt agreed to contact David Briggs about use of a Hotel Coolidge meeting room. It was agreed to the following schedule:

5:00 p.m. Set-up  
5:30-6:00 Mix & Mingle  
6:00-7:00 Presentations (5 minutes each)  
7:00-8:00 Mix & Mingle

As for organizations to invite, Katie suggested starting with the list of organizations from last year's event:

1. Vermont Institute of Natural Science
2. Vermont Center for Ecostudies
3. Hartford Garden Club
4. Hartford Tree Board
5. Hartford Climate Action Steering Team
6. Hartford Salamander Team
7. White River Partnership
8. Upper Valley Land Trust
9. Resilient Hartford
10. Conservation Commission

Katie asked if other organizations should be invited. Ted suggested the Montshire Museum of Science and the Vermont Herp Atlas. He agreed to contact them. Katie agreed to contact the other organizations. Katie suggested asking Junction Arts & Media (JAM) to record the event. Matt agreed

to contact JAM. Katie suggested that the focus of the event should be on projects related to the Town and getting people involved. The HCC agreed. Katie and Ted agreed to come up with the invitation wording.

**15. Community Resilience Building Event:** Katie reported that Holly and she attended the Community Resilience Building (CRB) event at the Wilder Club on December 5<sup>th</sup>. She noted that the event was sponsored by the Nature Conservancy to identify and prioritize steps to reduce risk and improve resilience across Hartford and beyond. She noted that there were small group discussions. The workshop's objectives were to:

- Strengthen understanding between hazard impacts and local planning efforts.
- Evaluate strengths and vulnerabilities of the community, infrastructure, and natural resources.
- Develop and prioritize resilient actions for the municipality, local organizations, businesses, neighborhoods, land trusts, and community organizations.

Matt noted that Lebanon held a CRB event a year ago and was the first New Hampshire community to participate in the program. Hartford was the first Vermont community to participate in the program. He added that the Nature Conservancy will develop a report on the Hartford CRB event. Matt stated that this process will help kick-off the update of the Hartford Hazard Mitigation Plan that Resilient Hartford will be working on this year. Katie concluded that according to the Nature Conservancy organizer Adam Whelchel, Hartford is a very positive and collaborative community.

**16. Upcoming HCC Events:**

- a. Family Forest Frolic: Saturday 1/11 at 1:00 p.m.
- b. Annual Winter Natural History Walk: Saturday, 1/25 at 8:00 a.m.
- c. Conservation Mix & Mingle: Friday, 3/7.
- d. Vernal Pool Walk: A Saturday in April.
- e. Green-Up Day: Saturday, 5/3.
- f. Migratory Bird Walk: Saturday, 5/17.
- g. Trails Day: Saturday, 6/7.

**17. Announcements/Reports:**

- a. Invasive Plant Removal: Katie suggested holding an invasive plant pull in the Town Forest. She will talk to Dan Gibson to see if he might be interested in doing that with his Natural Resources Class.
- b. HCC Calendar: Katie suggested putting a HCC calendar of events on the HCC webpage. HCC agreed. Katie volunteered to work on it.

**18. Next HCC Meeting:** Katie noted that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, 2/3 at 7:00 p.m.

**19. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 8:18 p.m.

**20. Action Items:**

- a. The HCC agreed to postpone a decision on allowing the removal of some cut trees from the Town Forest until Hartford Area Career & Technology Center teacher Dan Gibson can participate in the discussion.
- b. The next Family Forest Frolic event is scheduled for Saturday, January 11<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 p.m.
- c. Matt reported that in the spring, he will schedule a site visit with Dartmouth Professor and Aquatic Biologist and former HCC member Celia Chen to get her opinion about the bank erosion.

- d. Mike will contact the Vermont Law and Graduate School to see about students working on the land conservation toolkit during the spring semester.
- e. Sky and Mary will meet and provide a report at a future HCC meeting about the HCC Awards Program.
- f. Katie is scheduled to meet with Danielle late in January to go over the changes to the HCC webpage.
- g. Matt will make the revisions to the HCC Bylaws, send the revised draft to Katie and Mike to review prior to presenting the draft bylaws to the HCC to consider at a future meeting.
- h. Mike reported that he will be attending a meeting tomorrow evening on the Ottauquechee Trail. Mike agreed to let Holly Henderson know about the meeting.
- i. Matt agreed to contact David Briggs about use of Hotel Coolidge for the Environmental Stewardship Mix & Mingle event.
- j. Ted agreed to contact the Montshire Museum and the Vermont Herp Atlas about attending the Environmental Stewardship Mix & Mingle event. Katie agreed to contact the other organizations.
- k. Katie and Ted agreed to come up with the invitation wording for the Environmental Stewardship Mix & Mingle event.
- l. Katie agreed to contact Dan Gibson about the possibility of the HAC&TC Natural Resources Class removing invasive plants in the Town Forest.
- m. Katie volunteered to work on creating a calendar for the HCC.

**21. 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).