

Approved Minutes of the
Hartford Conservation Commission
April 7, 2025

Members Present: Chris Beetham, Sky Claud, Mike Harris, Mary Hutchins, Ted Levin and chair Katie Mann.

Staff Present: Town Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: Selectboard Liaison Erik Krauss, Vermont Law and Graduate School student attorneys Aamoré Richards and Auburn Schnitzer, Vermont Law and Graduate School Professors Christophe Courchesne and Todd Howland.

A hybrid Hartford Conservation Commission (HCC) Meeting in compliance of the Open Meeting Law was held on Monday, April 7th 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. Katie proceeded to read the Hybrid Meeting Script followed by roll call introductions.

1. **Approval of Minutes:** Katie asked if there were any changes to the draft minutes of 3/3/25. There were none. Katie stated that the minutes of 3/3/25 are approved as written by unanimous consent.
2. **Public Comments:** Katie asked if there were any public comments. There were none.
3. **Conservation:** Vermont Law and Graduate School (VL&GS) student attorneys Aamoré Richards and Auburn Schnitzer were in attendance to present a paper providing an overview of land conservation goals and strategies. This is part one of a two-part project where a future students will create a pamphlet for public dissemination. Aamoré and Auburn covered the following topics:
 - Importance of Conserving Land
 - Types of Conservation Easements
 - Financial Incentives for Conserving Land
 - Mechanisms for Conserving Land
 - Land Conservation Risks

Mike noted that the purpose of this project is to develop a toolbox for landowners and that conservation easements are the most frequently used. He asked the HCC if there were anything that they would like to add. There were no suggestions.

Katie noted the state goals of conserving 30% of the state by 2030 and 50% by 2050. She stated that it would be great to have a pamphlet developed as the next step. Mike noted the current HCC policy is to utilize the Town conservation fund to provide financial assistance to property owners to cover some of the costs with placing a conservation easement on their property.

Professor Courchesne noted that it is possible students could work on the conservation pamphlet during the summer or fall term.

Ted asked what the difference between a conservation easement is and enrolling in the state current use program. Aamoré responded that a conservation easement is permanent while enrollment in the current use program is not.

Eric Krauss noted that the HCC is identifying high value conservation lands and the Planning Commission is identifying appropriate parcels for development. Katie agreed that we need more affordable housing in Hartford.

Katie asked the Conservation Commission to email Aamoré if they have additional comments. Katie thanked Aamoré and Auburn for preparing the paper and presenting it to the HCC. She also thanked Professors Christophe Courchesne and Todd Howland for attending.

4. **HCC Bylaw Amendments:** Katie asked if there were any comments regarding the draft bylaw changes. Being none, Mary made a motion to approve the draft bylaw changes as presented. The motion was seconded by Mike Harris and unanimously approved. Matt noted that the next step is to go before the Selectboard for approval. Matt will inquire about getting on a Selectboard meeting agenda.
5. **Green-Up Day:** Matt reported that Green-Up Day is scheduled for Saturday, May 3rd. He noted that people can pick up bags starting April 21st at the Town Hall and Quechee Library. Matt noted that dumpsters will arrive at the Town Hall and Quechee Green on Wednesday, April 30th and be picked up Tuesday, May 6th. Katie asked Matt about contacting White River Subaru about the possibility that they can dispose of tires that we collect. Matt agreed to talk to White River Subaru. Matt noted that he could use help on Friday, May 2nd. Sky and Chris responded that they might be able to help out. Matt agreed to work on Green-Up Day preparations. He will also work with the Town Communications and Media Specialist JD Hawks on promotion. Katie volunteered to help out on Green-Up Day. Chris may be able to help as well.
6. **Town Forest Ice Storm Damage:** Matt reported that he received a call from Sheila Hastie that there was extensive damage in the Town Forest two weekends ago during the ice storm and many trees fell across trails. The HCC agreed that we should let the forest dry out a bit before doing clean-up work. Matt agreed to contact Sheila. Chris suggested that depending on the extent of damage, we may want to focus on clean-up during the June 7th Trails Day event.
7. **Family Forest Frolic:** Sky reported that the next Family Forest Frolic event is scheduled for Saturday, April 12th at 10:00 a.m. at the Town Forest. Katie agreed to post the event in the Valley News Calendar and the Listserv. Ted will post in Daybreak.
8. **Vernal Pool Walk:** There was discussion about when to hold the annual vernal pool walk. Sky reported that Ben Fletcher of the Hartford Salamander Team is available Sunday, April 20th at 10:00 a.m. Sky agreed to help out. Katie agreed to obtain the traps. Chris will set up the traps the day before.
9. **HCC Awards Program:** Sky suggested that the award nominations be due in August with the selection at the September 8th HCC meeting. Mary and Sky will review the nominations and submit the top four nominations to the HCC. There was discussion about criteria for selection and agreement that this is a new program and that we may learn as we go. It was agreed that the nomination open in June and selection include a written justification.
10. **HCC Website:** Katie noted that the conservation webpages are better organized, but it is still wordy and hard to get to events. She noted that it is a work in progress. She asked the HCC if they have comments to let her know.
11. **Ottauquechee School Request:** Katie reported that she will work with Sky and Holly on the 5/2 Ottauquechee School event at the Town Forest. The School is interested in learning about wolf habitat and rewilding. Katie said the talk will focus on reading the landscape. It was agreed that Sky, Holly and Katie will meet to discuss further.
12. **HCC Environmental Stewardship Mix & Mingle:** Katie reported that the 3/7 event at the Bugbee Senior Center went well with 50 people in attendance. The event was recorded, and the video was

posted on the HCC webpage. Apple Corps participated this year. In addition, the Winter Center made a request to attend the event next year. Katie said the event was a good networking opportunity.

13. Ottawaquechee Trail: Mike reported that he will be attending a Ottawaquechee Trail meeting on 4/10.

14. Maanawaka Conservation Area Encampment: Matt reported that he received an email from Hazen Trail volunteer Andrew Potter that he and his family cleaned up an abandoned encampment on the property. Katie expressed the Commission's gratitude for doing that.

15. Wildflower Walk: Katie reported that Holly volunteered to lead the Wildflower walk at the Maanawaka Conservation Area on Saturday, April 26th at 10:00 a.m.

16. VELCO Herbicide Treatment of the Power Lines in the Maanawaka Conservation Area: Matt reported that he received an email from Vermont Electric Power Company (VELCO) about their plans to use herbicides to treat vegetation along the power lines that run through the Maanawaka Conservation Area. Matt noted that he requested that the Town be notified of the date that the property will be treated and what herbicide they will be using so we can post the property and alert the public. Mike volunteered to look into the use of herbicides.

17. Upcoming HCC Events:

- a. Family Forest Frolic: Saturday 4/12 at 10:00 a.m.
- b. Vernal Pool Walk: Sunday, 4/20 at 10:00 a.m.
- c. Maanawaka Conservation Area Wildflower Walk: Saturday, 4/26 at 10:00 a.m.
- d. Green-Up Day: Saturday, 5/3 8:30 a.m. - Noon
- e. Migratory Bird Walk: Saturday, 5/17 at 5:30 a.m.
- f. Trails Day: Saturday, 6/7 from 9:00 a.m. - Noon.

18. Announcements/Reports: There were no announcements.

19. Community Events:

1. Cedar Circle Workshops: <https://cedarcirclefarm.org/education/workshops>
2. Cedar Circle New Teen Farm Fellowship: <https://cedarcirclefarm.org/education/teen-farm-fellowship>

20. Next HCC Meeting: Katie noted that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, 5/5 at 7:00 p.m.

21. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

22. Action Items:

- a. Matt will inquire about getting the HCC Bylaws on a Selectboard meeting agenda.
- b. Matt agreed to talk to White River Subaru about tire disposal from Green-Up Day.
- c. Sky and Chris might be able to help out Matt with Green Up work on Friday, May 2nd.
- d. Matt agreed to work on Green-Up Day preparations. Matt will work with the Town Communications and Media Specialist JD Hawks on promotion.
- e. Katie volunteered to help out on Green-Up Day.
- f. Chris may be able to help out on Green-Up Day.
- g. Matt agreed to contact Sheila Hastie about clean-up of damaged trees in the Town Forest.

- h. The next Family Forest Frolic event is scheduled for Saturday, April 12th at 10:00 a.m. at the Town Forest. Katie agreed to post the event in the Valley News Calendar and the Listserv. Ted will post in Daybreak.
- i. It was agreed that the nomination for the HCC Conservation Award be open in June and selection include a written justification.
- j. It was agreed that Sky, Holly and Katie will meet to discuss preparations for the 5/2 Ottauquechee School event at the Town Forest.
- k. Mike reported that he will attend the 4/10 Ottauquechee Trail meeting.
- l. Holly volunteered to lead the Wildflower walk at the Maanawaka Conservation Area on Saturday, April 26th at 10:00 a.m.
- m. Mike volunteered to look into herbicide use by VELCO on the power line corridor that runs through the Maanawaka Conservation Area.

23. 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).