

Approved Minutes of the
Hartford Conservation Commission
October 6, 2025

Members Present: Sky Claud, James Donahey, Holly Henderson, Mary Hutchins, Ted Levin and chair Katie Mann.

Staff Present: Town Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: Tad Montgomery and Selectboard Liaison Erik Krauss.

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

1. **Welcome New Member James Donahey:** Chair Katie Mann welcomed new HCC member James Donahey which was followed by introductions.
2. **Vermont Open Meeting Law:** Katie asked Matt for clarification on the open meeting law. Matt responded that if there is a quorum (four or more HCC members) gathered together, it constitutes a meeting and needs to have a public notice and minutes of the meeting. Also, the HCC is not allowed to conduct business or make decisions via email. However, using email to schedule meetings is permissible.
3. **Approval of Minutes:** Katie asked if there were any changes to the draft minutes of 7/7/25. Being none, Katie stated that the minutes of 7/7/25 are accepted as written by unanimous consent.
4. **Green-Up Day Results:** Matt reported that the May 3rd Hartford Green-Up Day resulted in participation of 430 volunteers, used 550 green-up bags, collected 83 tires and 5,838 pounds of trash and greened-up 92 miles of Hartford roads.
5. **Public Comments:** Katie asked if there were any public comments. Resident Tad Montgomery, a self-proclaimed amateur mycologist brought a large mushroom that he foraged and offered it to the HCC. Katie thanked him.
6. **HCC Bylaw Amendments:** Matt reported that on September 2nd, the Selectboard approved the HCC bylaw amendments. Matt noted that besides the recommended changes by the HCC, a change to bylaw amendments section was made at the request of the Town Manager. Matt noted that the HCC hadn't made any changes to the bylaws in a long time. Katie asked Matt to post the updated bylaws on the HCC webpage. Matt agreed.
7. **HCC Awards Program:** Sky reported that only two nominations were submitted. There was consensus that nominations should be re-opened in the winter, announced at the Environmental Stewardship Mix & Mingle event, closed in April and announced at the Hartford Community Coalition Block Party in June. Katie agreed to contact the Mix & Mingle contacts. Holly suggested that it not be limited to a Town resident. The HCC agreed.
8. **Town Forest Walk with the County Forester:** Holly reported that she met with County Forester Dan Healy in the Town Forest. She noted that Dan will continue to advise the HCC.
9. **Chestnut Trees for the Town Forest:** Holly Katie reported that Daniel Jones of the American Chestnut Foundation offered to provide chestnut saplings for the Town Forest. Holly asked the HCC

if they could be planted in the Town Forest in the spring. The HCC discussed the need to plant the saplings in well-drained soil with plenty of sunlight and protect the saplings with tree tubes. It was agreed to plant the saplings in spring. Holly will reach out to County Forester Dan Healy. Katie will ask the Hartford Area Career Technology Center Natural Resources class if they are interested in assisting with the planting.

10. **Family Forest Frolic:** Sky reported that she led a Sounds of Night Family Forest Frolic in August but noted that there was a small turnout.
11. **Town Forest Wildlife Habitat Assessment Update:** Katie noted that the HCC would like to update the Wildlife Habitat Assessment with new data since it was completed fifteen years ago. She noted that it should be more of a landscape level assessment than the former assessment. The HCC agreed. She asked for assistance in finding a consultant. Ted suggested doing the assessment in-house with a group of volunteers and plot out key dates. He thought it could be done over a two or three-year period. The HCC agreed. James noted that we should contact the UVM Naturalist Program as well as using I-Naturalist. Others agreed.
12. **Maanawaka Conservation Area Management Plan:** Katie noted that the Maanawaka Conservation Area Management Plan was last done in 1999 and needs to be updated. Katie suggested establishing a subcommittee to work on the update. Katie, Holly and James volunteered. Katie noted that the 1999 Plan talked about a pedestrian connection to the Maanawaka Conservation Area but noted that the Plan was done before the Wilder multi-use path. It was agreed that it should not be pursued.
13. **Maanawaka Sign:** Katie suggested that a sign be erected on Route 5 to let the public know about the property and trails. Others agreed. Matt will look into it.
14. **Maanawaka Conservation Area Power Line Herbicide Treatment:** Matt reported that VELCO notified him the day before the planned application of herbicide along powerline corridors in the Maanawaka Conservation Area. Matt posted information about the herbicide application on the Trailhead kiosk and requested that next year VELCO provide advance notice so we can get the word out to the public. Holly suggested that information on the herbicide application should be included in the Management Plan. The HCC agreed.
15. **Maanawaka Conservation Area Encampment:** Matt reported that he visited the former encampment and that it had been vacated. He did note that the area needs to be regraded to its natural condition and that there is trash to clean up. The HCC agreed to conduct a clean-up on Sunday, November 9th at 10:00 a.m. Matt agreed to contact DPW about the clean-up and disposal of the trash.
16. **Annual Maanawaka Posting:** Matt reported that this month he will conduct the annual posting of the Maanawaka Conservation Area. James volunteered to assist Matt.
17. **Pollinator Gardens:** Katie reported that the White River School Pollinator Garden is doing well and the School is embracing the pollinator theme. Matt reported that the Pollinator Garden at the Clifford Park Food Forest in West Hartford is doing very well. An expansion of the garden is planned for Thursday, October 23rd at 4:00 p.m.
18. **Upcoming HCC Events:**
 - a. Maanawaka Conservation Area Clean-up: Sunday, November 9th at 10:00 a.m.
19. **Announcements/Reports:**

- a. **Annual Meeting of the Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions:** Katie reported that she attended the AVCC annual meeting which had presenters from the Vermont Center for Ecostudies and the Vermont Institute of Natural Science. She noted that the AVCC mini grants have increased from \$600 to \$800. Matt suggested thinking about a possible project.

20. Community Events:

- a. Association of Vermont Cons Comm: Vermont's Land Conservation: Where Do We Go From Here? <https://vtconservation.com/fall-webinars-from-the-community-wildlife-program/>
Session 1: Wednesday, October 8th from 11:00 am to 12:00 pm – [Register here](#)
- b. Vermont Woodlands Association: <https://vermontwoodlands.org/upcoming-events/>
- c. Vermont Coverts; Woodlands for Wildlife: <https://vtcoverts.org/calendar.html>
- d. Upper Valley Land Trust: <https://uvlt.org/events/list/>

21. Next HCC Meeting: Katie noted that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, 11/3 at 7:00 p.m.

22. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

23. Action Items:

- a. Katie asked Matt to post the updated bylaws on the HCC webpage.
- b. There was consensus that nominations for the Conservator of the Year award should be re-opened in the winter, announced at the Environmental Stewardship Mix & Mingle event, closed in April and announced at the Hartford Community Coalition Block Party in June.
- c. Holly will reach out to County Forester Dan Healy about locations for the chestnut seedlings.
- d. Katie will ask the Hartford Area Career Technology Center Natural Resources class if they are interested in the chestnut planting.
- e. The HCC agreed to work on the Town Forest Wildlife Habitat Assessment on their own.
- f. Holly, Katie and James agreed to form a Steering Committee and work on the Maanawaka Management Plan.
- g. It was agreed that since the Wilder multi-use path was built after the Maanawaka Conservation Area Management Plan that a pedestrian should not be pursued.
- h. Katie suggested that a sign be erected on Route 5 to let the public know about the property and trails. Matt will look into it.
- i. Holly suggested that the herbicide application should be included in the Management Plan.
- j. The HCC agreed to conduct a clean-up of the Maanawaka Conservation Area homeless encampment on Sunday, November 9th at 10:00 a.m. Matt agreed to contact DPW about the clean-up and disposal of the trash.
- k. Matt reported that this month he will conduct the annual posting of the Maanawaka Conservation Area. James volunteered to assist Matt.

24. HCC Member Terms: Sky Claud, (7/31/27), James Donahey (7/13/29), 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).