

WEATHERSFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES

June 24, 2021

Conservation Commission Members present: Ryan Gumbart, Heather Shand, Cheryl Cox, Roy Burton, Ellen Clattenburg.

**** Note:** prior to the meeting's commencement, Howard Leach stopped by to give an explanation of the new zoning map for the town (which is actually a reversion to the 1986 (or so) town zoning map). The "conservation district" refers to land zoned for 10 acres. In current zoning, a majority of the town (~80%) is zoned as 10 acre zoning. The zoning that the Planning Commission proposes will take the town back to its earlier zoning, something that the Regional Planners have encouraged, the State also wants, and which makes it possible for more people to own land and build. Land that remains "conservation land" is land that is too wet, too steep, too high (over 1500'), over 4 acres of prime ag soils, etc. as well as lands whose conservation easements are owned by land trusts. One new addition will be making it possible to have a ½ acre lot in villages. Currently, the town plan has 1 acre zoning in villages which makes most of the lots non conforming and makes it hard for individuals to get improvement loans if they are living on a non conforming parcel. The Planning Commission hopes to get the town plan approved by the Selectboard this summer. After Howard's report, he had to leave for another engagement.

Approval of Minutes, May 27 meeting

Cheryl made a motion to approve the minutes as presented

Heather seconded the motion

The minutes were approved unanimously

Conservation Commission sponsored workshops, talks and walks:

Bat house workshop: October is the best month for Alyssa Bennett, small mammal biologist for F & W to give a talk on bats. Roy will be in touch with her offering Saturday, October 23, Friday October 29 or Saturday October 30 as possibilities. Morning or evening (except Oct. 30) -- whatever works best for her.

The 5 bat house kits and the one bat house constructed by Roy and his grandson will be given away as door prizes.

Harry Temple Lookout: Ellen will contact Tim Morton before our next meeting if she does not hear from him to find out how the signage is coming for the Harry Temple Lookout on the Weathersfield Trail on Mt. Ascutney.

Town forest update: Ryan

Stan Spencer mowed the power line and loop – 4 hours

Rather than pay Stan for his work (he did this once as a favor and so that he could get going on the new ATA bike trail), we should do our part to follow up with providing a kiosk and help with future ATA planning as well as helping to advertise the opening of the trail as a beginner trail. Perhaps the opening could be a youth biking event.) Since mowing, Stan has been readying the trail for the ATA work bee to finalize the new bike route.

Conservation Commission Secretary:

Roy nominated Ellen Clattenburg;

Cheryl seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

Shade Trees in Weathersfield

Ryan is the new Tree Warden. The tree warden is the manager of the shade trees, either planted by the Town or shade trees if they are designated in a town-adopted shade tree plan (which we do not have at this point). The trees we could think of were the grove in the Center and possibly the trees on the Perkinsville Green and the Ascutney Green.

The state has redone the statutes to clarify the role of the Tree Warden whose job will be to care for/ monitor trees planted by the municipality or to plant and care for trees that the municipality will plant.

Roy raised the issue about whose responsibility it is to designate ashes in the right of way which might be (will be) killed by EAB and to get these trees dealt with proactively.

Heather mentioned that the Conservation Commission began an effort, headed by Tina Wood, to identify and map the canopy over town roads in order to have these areas protected. Would this be something that a municipal shade tree plan incorporates?

Ryan will be talking to various groups in town to figure out if the town should create a shade tree plan

Because of the State's renewed interest in Tree Warden statutes and the Vermont Urban and Community Forestry's "Resilient Right-of-Ways" project

(<https://vtcommunityforestry.org/program/technical-assistance/resilient-right-of-ways>) there are grants to support shade tree work by wardens.

Next WCC meeting: Thursday July 21 (NOTE, not the last Thursday in the month, but it is the 4th Thursday).

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 pm

Respectfully submitted, Ellen Clattenburg

