

Weathersfield Conservation Commission
Minutes
September 23, 2021

Members Present: Ryan Gumbart, Howard Beach, Roy Burton, Tyler Harwell, and Cheryl Cox

Members Absent: Jeff Pelton, Ellen Clattenburg and Heather Shand

Guests Present: Alice Roberts and Kathy Urffer

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Ryan.

Approval of minutes, August meeting

Minutes were not recorded at the August 26 meeting because there was no quorum. Instead, Ellen distributed "notes" via email.

Town Forest update

Phase 1 trails

Ryan reviewed the work that has been done to date. After the ATA agreement was signed, the WCC voted to approve the construction of Phase 1 Trails which is nearing completion. Mowing has been completed twice this summer.

VOREC grant

Carol Lighthall, Executive Director of the Okemo Valley Chamber of Commerce, contacted Town Managers in the region to tell them about the Vermont Outdoor Recreation Grant (VOREC). She suggested that Weathersfield, Chester, and Ludlow submit a proposal together, with separate projects for each town within the proposal. Weathersfield's project would focus on the Town Forest. Brandon responded with a letter of interest that could result in an invitation to apply for a grant. Ryan, Carol, and Stan Spencer visited the Town Forest together. Stan and Brandon wrote a proposal that included building the high line single track trail, development of single track trail in the blue zone, replacement of a bridge crossing the brook with a new bridge or culvert, and destruction and disposal of the cabin. Discussion ensued.

Based on discussion, the WCC members agreed that

- Phase 1 should be completed before we continue with any other projects;
- if we are invited to apply, we should vote on Phase 2;
- delay work on Highland Trail;
- consider the trail around Mt. Ascutney in the distant future;
- recommend to the Select Board that the cabin be demolished;
- and that the bridge/culvert crossing be included in the VOREC grant should we be invited to apply.

Tyler motioned to approve a letter of support for the VOREC grant and to authorize Ryan to submit it on behalf of the Weathersfield Conservation Commission. Howard seconded the motion that then passed unanimously.

Contract Mowing

In other business regarding the Town Forest, Stan needs to be paid for mowing. Tyler motioned that we request the Select Board to pay Stan's bill for mowing in the Town Forest upon presentation of the bill. Howard seconded the motion that then passed unanimously.

Connecticut River Conservancy update on hydro dam relicensing

Kathy Urffer, River Steward (VT and NH) of the Connecticut River Conservancy, gave a presentation about the FERC relicensing of dams along the Connecticut River and its tributaries. In particular, she focused on the Wilder, Bellows Falls, and Vernon dams. The public comment period for relicensing is approaching, and she encouraged us to participate by addressing the needs and wants of townspeople and submitting those requests which could range from boat launches to wildlife protection. She will forward examples of letters and recommendations to Ryan to distribute to members.

Town Forest update

Signage

Jeff sent an email saying that he had been in touch with Matt Keniston who agreed to construct a kiosk for the Town Forest. Jeff will approach building suppliers for donations of lumber.

County Forester cruise/plan

Ryan will talk to Hannah Dallas, County Forester, to see if she will put together a plan for the Town Forest.

Current Project updates

Bat Talk

The Bat Talk is scheduled for Saturday, October 23 at 10:00 am. Cheryl will send out a press release.

Harry Temple lookout

Tricia Temple is organizing a memorial ceremony for Harry at the bottom of the Weathersfield Trail for Sunday, October 17 at 10:00 am. Concerns about parking and the number of people that might attend were expressed.

Waterway Naming project

Jeff has sent a document to members for review and welcomes editing.

Scenic Vistas project

Ryan has put together a spreadsheet with locations of scenic vistas.

Volunteer application comments

Brandon has drafted an application for new volunteers. We would like him to include that new members should come to a meeting before signing up to volunteer.

Development site visit

This item is tabled until we have an administrator.

WCC sponsored workshop/hike ideas

The suggestion was made to organize a walk of the Town Forest for community members.

The motion was made to adjourn at 9:20 by Howard, seconded by Tyler, and agreed to by all.

Respectfully submitted,
Cheryl Cox, substituting for Ellen Clattenburg

Next meeting:

October 28, 2021, 7:00 pm

Center Meeting House, Weathersfield, Vermont