

WEATHERSFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Thursday February 24, 2022, 7:00 PM

Location: Martin Memorial Hall

5259 Route 5, Ascutney, VT 05030

Remote:

<https://www.weathersfieldvt.org/home/news/public-meetings-zoom>

In attendance: Howard Beach, Ryan Gumbart, Roy Burton, Jeff Pelton, Cheryl Cox, Tyler Harwell. Recorded on SAPA TV.

Guest: Hannah Dallas, Windsor County Forester

Minutes, January meeting: Jeff Pelton moved, Howard Beach seconded and all voted in favor of minutes as presented.

Town Forest update

a. Management Plan for our mixed use Town Forest: Hannah Dallas attended the meeting to learn what we wanted for our Town Forest Plan.

- Should reflect the mixed uses of our Town Forest: habitat, forest health, recreation
- Should identify health stressors
- Might point to a way we can work with partners – ATA, VELCO – coordinating efforts, not all doing separate projects
- The Paradise Park plan is similar to what we are looking for with the difference that Paradise Park is heavily used and our Town Forest is underused. We'd like a plan that helps us get folks out there to explore, learn
- Photographs are a good addition
- Length of plan could be 5-25 years. Hannah said 10 years is typical for a management plan. The early part of ours will focus on recreation and education, forest management would be a later goal.
- Hannah will conduct an inventory now that she understands what we are looking for and then she will come back to get more input once she's collected data. Roy told her how impressed she was with the plan she did for Paradise Park. She plans to visit in a couple months (during spring ephemerals) then again during the summer, to gain a better understanding of the plants that are there
- The ATA agreement does not limit where we can manage the forest. However, primarily we will be managing forest on the steep part of the mountain. Hannah noted how important it is during forest management projects to have good communication with plenty of warning about upcoming projects.
- VELCO will be doing some spraying this year, also taking down ash trees at some point.
- Ellen is to check on the wording about timber proceeds and how they are divided with the Edgar May Center.

- Check Brett Engstrom's ecological study of the Weathersfield Town Forest. (He was hired by the WCC some time ago.) Roy pointed out that it was quite general, not tied to particular parts of the Town Forest (i.e. no map).

Jeff gave kudos to Ryan for reaching out to VELCO. Ryan suggested working with VELCO to perhaps coordinate how to deal with invasives (suggesting perhaps planting native species in the corridor as well) and partnering with a group like Audubon because power line rights of way can offer important habitat to wildlife within a forest.

Ryan let Hannah know we applied for a grant (VOREC) for stream crossing, trails, and cabin removal. She suggests a 5 to 25 year management plan (10 year is standard). Let Hannah know so she can give a good overview for that time period. A lot of the education and recreation will be early goals, forest management longer term. Roy suggests 20 years.

County Foresters do public outreach, use the space as an educational opportunity and give forest demonstrations. Hannah suggested a meet and greet with the ATA, WCC, and the public. She also thought our town forest might be a good location for a 20 x 20 deer excluder. Each county forest can install one. She noted that with this, she would sample it once each year. It is also a great venue for public education. The WCC were enthusiastic about locating it within our town forest..

b. Cabin removal –we will wait on this. Still waiting on clarity about what tools volunteers can use. Meanwhile, WC commissioners are to make a list of potential helpers so when we are ready to take it down, we have the names.

Brook crossing: Rebecca Chalmers said it is fine to go through the Abbott property if we don't go directly through wetland or create ruts. She prefers this to going over the brook. If we need a wetland permit, it's very straightforward and she will make sure it's permitted properly. Think who might volunteer to help with cabin removal. Need a list of potential helpers.

c. Powerline treatment – VELCO maintains the power lines. They will be doing an herbicide treatment this summer. We'll work with VELCO to establish a diversity of plantings. Currently there are a lot of invasives in the corridor. Howard suggested taking advantage of VELCO equipment to use timber mats for getting equipment to the cabin. Ryan will talk to them about leaving any old ones we could use. He also will let them know it is public property (so the land can be properly posted around spray time for safety.)

3. Amphibian crossings – Liz Thompson has not returned Ryan's call, but Hartford is actively protecting amphibian crossings. Maybe we should check with them. Jim Andrews might be another source. Everyone should identify possible crossings.

4. WCC sponsored workshop/hike ideas

a. Tree pruning workshop – Ellen had spoken to people and is waiting to hear on their ideas for a workshop
b. Other ideas: vernal pool workshop? slope walk of Little Ascutey? paddle on the river? a chestnut orchard?

We need to be in contact with property owners for permissions.

Should we plan on a quarterly event - one each season - so people can plan on it?

The Conservation calendar – have an event or publish an article?

- Feb 28- Mar 4: National Invasive Species Awareness Week
- March 21: International Forests Day
- April 22: Earth Day
- May 6: Arbor Day
- May 22-28: EAB Awareness Week – let's keep this information up to date.

Jeff has put together a list of projects in case a grant opportunity comes up. Everyone should forward grant opportunities to Ryan.

5. Waterway naming project update – Jeff showed a map that the Regional Commission had produced of the project. It will be posted at the exit to the voting but they need an easel. Jeff also has a packet of petitions and a map to accompany them and will start to circulate them. Ellen will circulate among WHS board of governors.

6. Appointments - Some confusion whether Roy and Heather have been reappointed or not. Ryan will double check.

7. WCC Meeting date – In his new position Ran is scheduling zoning board meetings. They have moved their meeting to 2nd and 4th Thursdays each month which is a conflict with our meetings. Ryan will look into this.

8. Other/new business Roy has recently watched a bobcat stalk and kill a squirrel. Others chimed in with bobcats they'd caught on their game cameras.

Adjournment: At 8:07 pm, Ellen made a motion to adjourn, and Roy seconded.

Next meeting: March 25, 2022, 7:00 PM

Location TBD

Respectfully submitted, Ellen Clattenburg