

## ***WEATHERSFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION***

### **Meeting Notes**

**Thursday June 23, 2022, 7:00 PM**

Location: Weathersfield Center Meeting House, Center Road, Weathersfield, Vermont Remote:

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

Present: Howard Beach, Roy Burton, Cheryl Cox, Ryan Gumbart, Ellen Clattenburg, Heather Shand. Devon Synder of VELCO phoned into the meeting.

Minutes: Howard Beach moved and Cheryl Cox seconded the motion to approve the May 26, 2022 minutes. All voted in favor.

#### **Town Forest**

- Powerline walk: Ryan has arranged a walk on the Town Forest section of the VELCO power lines with Devon Snyder of VELCO. Devon has invited Jason Hill from the VT Center for Ecostudies (VCE) to come along for bird identification. The WCC will host this educational walk along the powerline to understand the value of early successional shrubland habitat for bird populations. Shrublands are rare but they are critical habitats for wildlife including birds and pollinators. VELCO keeps trees below 12 feet and treats sections once every 4 years with a large flailing-head mower attached to an excavator, used to grind up shrubs and young trees, low-impact herbicide and chainsaws where there is standing water. Devon said that VELCO uses a different management technique than Green Mountain Power does (though we didn't learn what GMP does). The goal is to increase native species like juniper and elderberry.

The walk will be held at 9 AM July 16. Possibly a bumblebee expert from VCE will join the walk as well. Devon Snyder will come up with a list of talking points.

- Interpretive Signage under the power lines: Ryan wondered whether VELCO ever provided interpretive signage to highlight their vegetation management practices. Following the walk, Devon and Ryan will talk. Devon can provide the wording on how VELCO manages the land, and other information for the signage will include the value of shrublands as well as any specifics – such as bird species found there.

- The treatment of the power line corridor will be later in the spray season (probably Aug-Sept), and not where there is standing water. It will be mowed later – after Oct. 15.
- Cabin removal – Jeff, Ryan, Bruce & Cheryl all worked on the cabin removal project. The large fallen tree was removed, the two outbuildings were broken down, they stripped the wires and outlets from the cabin. The next work day is this Saturday – 8-12 noon. Jason Rasmussen will be there. The goal is to remove the roofing, rafters, and break down the walls.
- Kiosk and trails. The ATA keeps busy and is working on getting quotes on more trails. There are new ATA vinyl signs for Cloudspin to replace the ones that are missing and also some “you are here” signs. Also they’ve received permission for a wooden sign to indicate how to get to the town forest from the State Park.

Ryan will be checking for a different place for a stream crossing. He suspects that there could be a more gradual crossing which could require just stones to cross on.

#### Biannual conservation events

- Tree tour (Ellen and Cheryl) – There were at least 30 people. As the topic was fairly specialized, people came from far away to learn from Hank and Marina.
- Winter event (Jeff and Roy) – This will be a weasel talk by Chris Bernier. Roy will talk to Chris Bernier about the possibility of Oct 1, 8, or 22 in the evening.

#### Center Grove maintenance –

- Brandon Gulnick has been getting lots of complaints. The goal is to make the unmowed grass look intentional. What about fixing up the stone wall and mowing between the road and the stone wall? What about putting a notice in the papers? It’s all about helping people understand the transition.

#### ARPA fund proposal

- Various ideas from Jeff’s list were discussed. In the end the WCC decided that we would go with a town forest-oriented request. Ideas we ran through are as follows:
  - Funds to build a boardwalk over the wet area next to the Abbott house. This would provide townspeople better access to the town forest. The request should include signage about rules of the property (including no horses on a boardwalk, for instance). Include

funding for some benches as well. Ellen will draft a letter but first will come up with an estimate on the costs.

- Game of logging course? Useful workshop to teach people how to use chainsaws safely. The course could be held in the town forest to do small-scale timber stand improvement or removing ash trees. Roy suggested talking to Tim Burton about using the State Forest. His concern is having quick access to a road if there's an emergency. Ryan will explore these ideas.

#### New Business

Carol Lighthall of the Ludlow chamber of commerce had been in touch with Ryan. She is trying to add more trails to a certain app. VOREC grant folks suggested using the Trail Finder app. Carol asked us for trails managed by public bodies (like the town, ATA) Ryan will let her know to check in with the ATA on Town Forest trails and the Army Corps for trails in the flood control area.

Town Plan/ Zoning Bylaws: As the Selectboard sent this back to the Planning Commission, Howard explained that it would be good for the WCC to be involved from the start with the progress and to offer suggestions. Be proactive, don't wait to be asked. Ryan and Howard will give monthly updates on progress and what we should be working on.

Waterway naming project: Jeff presented it to the Planning Commission to apprise them. The major concern was that landowners had not been informed. It seems that there are fears that naming the streams makes them more jurisdictional although it does nothing other than give names to streams that had more than one name or were not named at all. Action plan is to draft a letter to go to landowners. Identifying the landowners on previously unnamed streams will be done through the Town's GIS map. Jeff will draft the letter.

Conditional Use: As Land Use Administrator, Ryan had received a zoning permit that requires a conditional use since the new construction will be in a deer yard and the bubble for rare and endangered species. He will ask ANR first if the house impinges on the rare and endangered species, then we can respond.

At 8:48, Ellen moved, and Howard seconded the motion to adjourn. All in favor.

Next meeting: July 28, 2022, 7:00 PM

Location: Weathersfield Center Meeting House

Respectfully submitted, Ellen Clattenburg