

Ferrisburgh Conservation Commission
Meeting February 8, 2022
approved Minutes

Members present: Craig Heindel, Chair, Jen Cirillo, Don Dewees, Amy Dohner, Matthew Gorton, Karen Pettersen and Tyler Steff

Guests: Tim Etchells, Rachel Guker, Barry Estasbrook, Erin Teodosio and Leah xxx

Craig opened the Zoom meeting at 7:08 p.m.

The January 11th, 2021 meeting notes were moved to be accepted as amended.

A. Potential members

1. Craig asked each of the potential members to introduce themselves and explain their interest in the Conservation Commission.

Rachel – New Ferrisburgh resident. Was a farmer in east Texas in regenerative agriculture.

Barry – 20 year Ferrisburgh resident. He worked as a journalist. He is interested in the interaction of food production, the environment and social effects of large scale agriculture.

Erin – She had lived in NJ where ½ of the land was conserved. She worked in human resources and was a Veterinarian technician.

Leah – She participated in the Town Forest walk during Ferrisburgh Day. Worked in the health field. She is new to Ferrisburgh and had previously lived in New Hampshire.

Tim – He is a Ferrisburgh resident and the secretary for the Ferrisburgh Planning Commission.

2. Craig explained how this Commission conducts its' responsibilities, including applying the open meeting law. Upon requests from the Zoning Board of Adjustment, the Planning Commission and the Selectboard the Commission will provide our input.

B. VAST bridge over Lewis Creek

1. Craig explained that the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers' bridge is located over Lewis Creek between Route 7 and Hollow Road. Clark Hinsdale told Craig that the local snowmobile club doesn't want to maintain the bridge any longer. Craig said the bridge is in disrepair and is an eyesore. Craig explained that the bridge was originally exempt from all permits because it was used for agriculture.
2. Craig suggested we support the removal of the bridge. The FCC could offer a letter of support.
3. Don asked if Clark wants it removed. Matt would support removal. Craig didn't think the bridge abutments would be affected by ice jams.

C. Lewis Creek Presentation

1. Craig explained the Lewis Creek Association to everyone.
2. Matt volunteered to host the presentation, which will be held on Feb. 9th at 7:00pm. Kate Kelly, Lewis Creek Association already has the zoom link.

D. Sullivan Zoning Application

1. The comments from the FCC were emailed to the FCC and to all parties involved with the Zoning Application for the road to the quarry.

2. Karen attended the hearing held on Feb. 2nd
3. The issue discussed at the hearing dealt with jurisdictional issues related to the preexisting presents of a quarry on this property.
4. *Karen will check with Bonnie Barnes, Zoning Administrator, regarding when the ZBA will move forward on this application.*

E. Cornerstone Subdivision Application

1. Craig explained the essence of this application, which is for property on Monkton Road and Rt. 7, to the members and guests. It is a PUD with residential and commercial lots. The developers presented a Sketch Plan to the Planning Commission. The PC recessed the hearing.
2. *Craig will ask Bonnie if she has received any additional information and the date of the next hearing.*

F. Town Forest

1. Craig explained that there is a local snowmobile club that has a trail thru the southeast corner of the Town Forest, and they have to ask permission annually from the Selectboard to use the trail within the Forest.
2. Craig explained that the Selectboard gave the Conservation Commission stewardship of the Town Forest, and a Management Plan was written by the County Forester a few years ago. Now the Management Plan needs to be refreshed.
3. Matt had a few meetings with students in the UVM NR206 class. Six students are interested in helping us with the Management Plan. Potential topics to explore are the potential for recreational use and what the FCC could do to maintain our management goals.
4. There is a site visit planned for Sat. Feb. 18th with the interested students. Craig suggested bringing micro spikes and/or snow shoes, and he thought it would take 6 hours to explore all the Forest.
5. Matt asked what objective do the Conservation Commission value the most.
 - a. **Craig** said an objective is to manage the Forest principally for wildlife, and specifically for Bobcats. Craig didn't want to expand or limit any proposed expansion of the existing trails within the Forest. The Commission had recommended at various Zoning Application hearings of abutters to limit exterior building lights and lights from cars from shining into the Forest. Part of the management plan should address invasives. The Commission has periodically inspected the trails for invasive plants.
 - b. **Amy** asked if there could be information gathered on the existing usage, and if there is any negative impact by people in the Forest.
 - c. **Don** said Bristol has a similar property as our Town Forest, but the property is in the Current Use Program, which has created some controversy. Craig said our Town Forest isn't in the Current Use Program.
 - d. **Amy** suggested we limit use and the limit the access based on a specific time of year and install a sign-in box.
 - e. **Jen** said the information concerning the Town Forest on our website should be reviewed for correct wording.
 - f. **Don** said we should know where the sensitive areas are.
 - g. Matt said that Bobcats are pretty adaptable, so we should be cautious about restrictive language.
 - h. **Jen** said she looked at Raven's Ridge wording on restrictive use during breeding times.
 - i. **Craig** said to remember including Abenaki input.
 - j. **Craig** wasn't expecting the students to have a finished project at the end of the semester.

k. **Matt** said the effort could be an on-going. He has some contacts at UVM regarding Abenaki input.

l. **Craig** asked *Matt to formalize the date and time of the student site visit and when the students would like to be at one of our meetings.* We could have a special meeting if the students couldn't make our regular monthly meeting. The student meeting wouldn't happen until early May or after.

G. Abenaki in the Champlain Basin Presentation

1. The presentation will be held on March 2th at 6 pm.
2. *Jen will set up the Zoom meeting and Amy will write up the information for our advertising.*

H. Trails Committee

1. Amy reached out to Pam Cousino, Town Clerk, regarding membership in the Committee. Pam was going to send out an email on the topic. Amy hasn't received the email as of this meeting.

I. Bird Presentation

1. Craig suggested the possibility of a slide show.
2. Matt said the discussion of bird habitats could be incorporated into a field trip.
3. Craig suggested that we could hold a yearly bird topic.
4. Bridget Butler will be leading a bird presentation/field trip on May 7th, Sat. at 8 am. The presentation will be limited to 15 participants. A rain date is scheduled for Sun. May 29th or sometime in June.
5. Finances – FCC has \$1000+/- in our account. Judy Dow's presentation cost is \$650+/- , exclusive of a driving tour, and Bridget Butler's presentation/field trip cost is \$275. The balance in our account after Bridget's presentation will be \$75.

J. AVCC – Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions

1. Amy is waiting to hear from the Town Treasurer if the Town sent in the yearly dues.
2. Craig wants to rejoin if we our membership has lapsed.
3. *Amy will contact Deb, Town Treasurer.*

K. New Business

1. Craig was contacted by the Planning Commission(PC) to discuss how to apply the Land Use Regulations (LUR) to Planned Unit Developments (PUD). The PC wants to know if the FCC thinks that the PUDs should be reviewed differently than the non PUD developments. Don asked why this issue has surfaced. Craig responded that this issue has come up due to the Cornerstone Application. Craig said that there are endangered wildlife and vascular plants on the property. *Craig will contact VT Fish and Wildlife.*
2. *Craig asked Karen to send out the agenda to the FCC members a week before the next FCC meeting.*

No other business was discussed and the meeting adjourned at 9:25 pm. The next scheduled meeting will be March 8th, 2022.

Respectively submitted,
Karen Pettersen, Secretary