

Ferrisburgh Conservation Commission
Meeting January 10, 2023 Approved Minutes

Members present: Craig Heindel (Chair), Don Dewees, Barry Estabrook, Karen Pettersen, Joe Nelson, Jen Cirillo (via Zoom)

Members absent: Amy Dohner, Matt Gorton, Tyler Steff.

Others Present: Bridgette Bolduc; Ken Corey (Vermont Master Naturalist Program)

1. Craig opened the meeting at 7:03 p.m.
2. December 13, 2022 Minutes to be accepted as amended.
3. Amendment to Agenda: Craig suggested we insert Don's post-storm observations in the Town Forest into Agenda Item #3, about Town Forest. Members agreed.
4. **Ferrisburgh Town Forest, Poison Parsnip, Downed Trees:** We discussed methods to deal with poison parsnip on snowmobile trail and elsewhere, which appear to be fairly small in number and in just a few spots. We agreed that we will attempt to remove them by hand in the spring. Bridgette volunteered to help. Don reported that he saw a few downed trees across the snowmobile trail. Craig will alert Brent Jerger of the snowmobile club. Don also reported a downed tree across the old town road just south of the Schultz-Aldrich driveway. Craig will contact them; we noted that town road commissioner John Bull may be able to remove this tree if it appears too dangerous for us to handle. Don also noted that there were a few branches and trees across the access trail on the Schultz-Aldrich property, which he thought could be dealt with in a few hours with a chainsaw in the spring. Regarding tree-clearing from the trails in the town forest, we agreed to make only narrow cuts through fallen trunks in order to exclude snowmobile use except on the snowmobile trail, and that "trail" look is important to maintain.
5. **Town Forest, next steps:** Joe suggested we dedicate a special meeting to discuss management of the Municipal Forest. Members agreed; to be scheduled later. Craig suggested that we spend several hours touring through the Forest beforehand just prior leaf-out this spring; we agreed to try to schedule this for a weekend day in early May. We also agreed that we need more detailed knowledge about the Forest before developing a new base management plan with a view to protecting plants and animals listed in the Vermont Species of Greatest Conservation Need document, particularly those that rely on the ecological characteristics of the Town Forest. Grants might be sought to pay for ecological evaluations. We should develop possible projects to propose to UVM NR-206 classes, possibly for the summer and/or fall 2023 and beyond. We agreed that other areas in the town, rather than the Town Forest, are more suitable to be developed for public recreation.
6. **Town Forest, possible project by Vermont Master Naturalist Program team:** Ken Corey reported that his Vermont Master Naturalist Program team wants to develop a project involving the Forest, and is interested in input from the Conservation Commission. He presented a report with some of his initial

observations and thoughts. The team's last field day will be in May or June, and the project needs to be completed by approximately the end of June. We provided some input and ideas; he will review with his team, and come back to future meetings with more detailed ideas.

5. **Planning Commission Applications:**

A. **No-Cut Zones, wording.** Craig had sent to CC members some proposed new wording [below] for the no-cut zone at the wooded knob at the proposed Champlain Valley Grain Center, which could also be used, with appropriate re-wording, for similar 25-foot no-cut zones along property boundaries, and for riparian buffers [town zoning regs, Sect. 5.29, says "50 feet from top of bank"]. Joe concurred, and we agreed that this wording is appropriate to recommend for the CVCG application and other future applications:

To provide some protection for wildlife travel and habitat, the "Existing Wooded Knoll" on Lot #3 shall be a no-cut zone, in which trees, saplings, woody-stemmed shrubs and herbaceous vegetation shall not be cut unless they are nuisance non-native species or present a hazard to structures, without prior approval by the Zoning Board of Adjustment who will solicit input from appropriate municipal boards such as the Ferrisburgh Conservation Commission and Ferrisburgh Planning Commission, or from the Ferrisburgh Selectboard if either of those boards are no longer active.

B. **Cornerstone. Proposed PUD at SE corner of Rte. 7 and Monkton Rd.** Craig and Joe noted the concerns with incursion into wetland areas and their buffers. We agreed that the Commission recommends that lot boundaries not extend into wetlands or buffers, so that these areas are in the single "common" parcel whose owner would oversee the wetlands and buffers; we suggested annual mowing of the buffer zones would be appropriate, to control the growth of nuisance species. The wetland buffers and/or wetlands themselves should have well-marked boundaries such as by boulders, fences or signs. The current site plan shows a road in a wide part of a wetland buffer; we recommend that it should be moved to be out of the wetland and buffer, or cross the wetlands/buffers in the narrowest possible location. We also expressed continuing concern about appropriate wastewater and stormwater permitting, as we have expressed at earlier hearings.

C. **Parker subdivision. West of Rte. 7, South of Tappers Crossing.** Craig and Joe noted that they requested to the Planning Commission that the mapped wetlands be avoided, and that 25-foot no-cut zones be provided along property lines; the full Commission agreed. The PC stated in an earlier hearing that those requests had been noted and required of Parker.

D. **Mead and Richardson subdivision, Four Winds Rd.** Craig and Joe said that if it receives the requested waivers from zoning regs, they requested at the previous PC hearing that 25-foot no-cut zones be provided along the northern and southern boundaries, and also riparian buffers for the stream that flows out of the pond on the adjacent parcel to the northwest through the western part of the proposed subdivision parcel. The full Commission agreed.

6. **Zoning Board of Adjustment Applications:**

- A. **Mann, application for Cannabis business on Long Pt. Rd.** Craig reported that the ZBA considered this application to be withdrawn because Mr. Mann has not answered the ZA's repeated inquiries or requests for further information.
 - B. **Dingman, subdivision application, Woods Rd.** The ZBA granted approval for the proposed apartment over a private-use woodshop, with shared septic. All permits were reported to be in place.
7. **Annual Report [2022] for Town Meeting Report.** Craig had emailed his suggested formatting edits to Don's first draft, which included the suggestion that two of John Medenwald's photographs be included, one of the mother bear with four cubs, and another of three cubs in a tree. We hope that Tyler will be able to insert these photos, with acknowledgement to John Medenwald, into the final report when he returns – final version is due to the town clerk by Jan. 20; Pam requested it as Word document.
8. **Vermont Invasive Species (management) Day.** Joe reported that he has written a draft of a letter supporting the establishment of a Vermont Invasive Species (management) Day, but he would like to polish it. When it is finished, he will email it to Commission members for approval.
9. **Conservation Commission Website.** Craig noted that Tyler had agreed to work on updates and additional information, with help from Amy.
10. **New Business:**
- A. **Shade Tree Preservation Plan.** Joe reported that he has spoken with John Bull, Road Foreman, and Jessica James, Selectboard Chair about the creation of a Town Shade Tree Preservation Plan. They told him they would consider and get back to him, and that the final decision is the responsibility of the Select Board. Craig said that because Jessica is stepping down as Selectboard chair in March, we could wait until her replacement is installed.
11. **Meeting Adjourns 9:06 p.m.**
12. **Next Meeting February 14, 2023**

Submitted by Barry Estabrook