

Ferrisburgh Conservation Commission  
Meeting February 14, 2023  
Approved Minutes

Members present: Craig Heindel, Don Dewees, Barry Estabrook, Karen Pettersen.

Members absent: Matt Gorton, Tyler Steff, Jen Cirillo, Amy Dohner, Joe Nelson,

Guest: Bridgette Bolduc

1. Craig opened the meeting at 7:05 p.m.
2. The January 10, 2023 meeting minutes were moved to be accepted as amended.
3. Town Forest
  - A. Walk-Though: Craig suggested that we gather Saturday May 6 at 9:00 a.m. at the usual parking pull-off on Robinson Rd. He said the goal is to get a sense the boundaries, to determine which may need to be remarked, to look for invasive species, and to consider possible objectives of the Forest Management Plan.
  - B. Master Naturalist Program Walk, Sat. Feb. 11. Don reported that there was a lot of interest with 11 people (including him) taking part. He said that the walk, which was led by the knowledgeable Alicia Daniel [MNP Director], was great. The group showed a lot of respect for science. It was a worthwhile educational experience, even though they did not have time to make it far into the Forest itself. He noted that the knob near the western boundary that Ken Corey proposed as a possible look-out

was difficult to access and offered little in terms of views even at this leafless time of year. He suggested that it would be worthwhile for the Commission to maintain contact with the group, which faces no deadline pressure to make a report.

- C. Management Plan next steps: Craig suggested that the commission should discuss these at its next meeting on March 14 when Joe is back. In answer to a question from Bridgette, Craig explained that two years ago the commission decided that the Management Plan needed updating. The commission might involve a professional to do the update, but before then the commission should gain a greater understanding of the forest through groups such as the UVM NR-206 classes, the Master Naturalist program, and the contacts we have made through them, so we know as much as possible about the forest (perhaps conducting a formal inventory) before setting goals for the revised plan. Craig noted that many town forests have hiking, biking and ski trails, so they experience a great deal of human incursion. What is different about Ferrisburgh's Town Forest is that it is not easily accessible, so it has only limited human incursion. Don suggested that we should consider what we want the Forest to be—protect it on one hand but also to be creative. Karen said we should be sure to consider endangered plant communities in any future plan.
- D. Downed trees: Craig reported that he contacted Brent Jerger [local snowmobile club] about trees across the snowmobile trail; Don reported that those had been taken care of. Don also noted that he had cut away some small trees across the access trail.

E. Presumed vernal pool in the clayplain forest: Craig said he would contact Matt about conducting a VTANR-compliant field assessment. We noted the potential advantage of already having locations for the ash-tree inventory plots from last fall's NR-206 class project. Craig doubted that the commission could afford a private consultant with our current budget.

F. Black ash seeds collecting: Brooke Fleischman, state seed coordinator based out of the Intervale Conservation Nursery could not attend the meeting due to Zoom problems, but she emailed us, telling the commission that black ash is of interest *“because of its cultural significance, vulnerability due to EAB, and lack in number of well-established populations across the state. Black ash seed generally disperse from July to October though, it has been observed that in some parts of the state, seeds disperse in August and September. I would be looking to collect seeds within this August-September time-period at the Ferrisburgh Town Forest. No more than 1/3 of the seeds present will be collected and realistically, even less than that will be collected due to branches being out of reach. No branches will be cut or trimmed to collect seed in order to limit our impact with the presence of EAB. Some seeds may be raked and collected from the ground if they have already dropped. The seeds collected will be used for propagation at the Intervale Conservation Nursery and distributed for restoration projects across the state.”*

4. Craig volunteered to send written input to the Cornerstone applicants before the Planning Commission's next meeting, based on wording in the January 2023 meeting minutes—unless someone else prefers to do so.

5. Mead/Richardson proposed PUD at 189 Four Winds Road: The commission agreed to support the PUD concept that would include some degree of conservation and protection on the western portion of the proposed lots, as proposed by the applicants. We did not decide on the type and degree of conservation measures we would recommend or support for their proposed conserved area, so we decided to see what the applicants propose. We favored requiring the applicants to refrain from applying chemical pesticides and herbicides on any agricultural plots and to maintain 50-foot buffers bordering the pond and streams. Craig said he would attend the February 15 Planning Commission meeting and subsequently reported that the Sketch Plan was enthusiastically and unanimously approved by Planning Commission. Applicants are working with local attorney and LaRose Surveyors on PUD details and conservation language, to be provided for their next permitting step.
6. Support letter regarding Invasive Species Day: Once the commission approves Joe's draft letter, and Craig said he would sign it on behalf of the Commission and send it to Bernie Paquette who is pursuing this initiative.
7. Bat presentation by Alyssa Bennett [small mammal biologist, VT F&W], March 23 at 6:00 p.m. at the Town Center [upstairs hall]: In a February 11 email, Amy asked commission members to let her know if they can help. Those who can, should arrive at 5:15 to help set up. Amy said she would advertise the event. Craig agreed to deliver an introduction. Don will provide cookies as refreshments. Jen and Amy might be able to do a draft brochure for Alyssa's review. Craig will ask Jen about providing computer, projector and screen—perhaps one belonging to Shelburne Farms. Amy will handle posting on calendars. Craig will post on FPFs, someone will send a brochure and notice to our email list.

8. Shade Tree Preservation Plan: We agreed that we would wait until Joe has approached the new Select Board chair in March or later.
9. Town Trail Committee members requested a meeting with us to talk about coordination: We will invite them to attend our March 14 meeting. Bridgette said that she would notify.
10. Tyler notified the commission by email on 2/14/2023 that he will be resigning. Craig told Tyler that the commission would miss his input and thanked him for participating. Craig reminded Tyler to send an official letter of resignation to Pam, and asked that Tyler copy him on that letter. The next step will be for Pam to post the notice of vacancy that we can also post/send to our usual notification routes. Our usual procedure is that we would recommend/request that potential candidates attend one of our meetings, and then send a letter of interest to the town clerk copied to us.
11. Meeting adjourned 8:35 p.m.
12. Next Meeting March 14

Submitted by Barry Estabrook