

# Ferrisburgh Conservation Commission Meeting

April 26, 2023

## Minutes Approved

Members present: Craig Heindel, Don Dewees, Barry Estabrook, Jen Cirillo, Amy Dohner, Joe Nelson, Karen Pettersen

Members absent: Matt Gorton

Guest: Ian Smiley of the Master Naturalist Program

1. Craig opened the meeting at 7:03 p.m.
2. The March 14, 2023 meeting minutes were moved to be accepted as presented.
3. Town Forest:

a. We noted that Matt emailed us recently, saying that he had already visited the Town Forest once for his vernal pool inspections, and that he would be sharing his findings with the Conservation Commission at the May 9, 2023 meeting. Don will contact Matt in the meantime to ask if he will be doing another inspection, and if yes, could he contact all CC members in case someone can join him.

2. Boundary walk. It will take place on May 6, 2023, between 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Joe and Don volunteered to bring loppers; Joe boundary line paint, a downloaded Avenza map, and a hammer; Craig a hammer, boundary signs, aluminum nails, and safety vests. Don will remind Brooke Fleischman and Judy Elson that they are welcome to come along. Craig said he would email instructions if there is potential for rain.
3. Plant walk. Ian said the Vermont Master Naturalist group planned to look at ephemerals with Kate Kreusi. Craig added that Commission members were welcome to attend. It will take place Saturday, May 21 beginning at 8:45 at the Robinson Road parking area.

d. Craig said that the VMN group asked him to lead a geology- oriented fieldtrip in the TF on Sat. April 29, 9:00 am to noon or so. They want to see if they can find evidence of Glacial Lake Vermont, because the ANR NatRes Atlas shows that most of the Forest was beneath the lake's surface, but the northwest corner is mapped as part of an island that was surrounded by the lake. The NCRS soils map shows mostly "shallow to bedrock" [although other soil types probably exist] so the NRCS info was not helpful. Craig also noted that the Atlas indicates that the predominant bedrock type in the Forest is Monkton quartzite.

e. Biothon. Ian asked the Commission about the VMN group organizing and conducting an environmental inventory ["Biothon"] in the TF in 2023, to update the inventory conducted by a UVM NR206 group of students in March 2022. This would be especially useful because the

UVM inventory was conducted in March, when flowers and other herbaceous plants were not visible. We agreed that we support this effort and other activities by citizen scientists.

We discussed the disadvantages and benefits of doing a season- long environmental inventory rather than shorter-term [one day, or one week]. Ian put forward May 21, 2023 as a possible date. When we hear from them about a firm date, we will post it on the Commission site and Front Porch Forum.

4. Zoning Board Applications: Craig and Joe attended a recent ZBA hearing, and reported the following:

a. Application No. 23-011 (J. Brownell) Contractors Yard, Tupper's Crossing. There was no new information about potential natural resource impacts.

b. Application No. 23-012 (R. Donovan) Short Term Rental at 718 Old Hollow Road. A recent document from the applicants indicates that they are withdrawing their application.

c. Application 22-019; Tier 2-6 Cannabis Cultivation. This application is for hoop houses in a field [no processing, or retail sales]. Craig said that he didn't see any natural resource issues.

d. Applications 23-022 and 23-023 (Hardie and Townsend). Joe reported that the ZBA approved the sketch plan on April 5, 2023. The natural resource topics that the CC raised were considered and addressed by the applicants and ZBA: protecting and physically marking the wetland buffers, and conserving the treed knob. The area west of these projects closer to the railroad tracks is already protected as wetland. He said that we should monitor the projects to make sure our concerns are carried forward.

e. Application 23-024; Franceschetti self-storage. Application is to add a few more storage units, to maximize the allowable impermeable area on the property. Craig saw no natural resources issues.

f. Cornerstone: Craig said that the project appears to be progressing slowly. It was reported that they apparently have the water supply topic resolved with Vergennes-Panton Water District, and the wastewater permitting is unresolved.

5. Planning Commission Hearing: Craig attended the April 5 PC hearing, and reported the following:

1. Open Space Agreements [OSAs] – Policies and Procedures. Jean Richardson and Bonnie Barnes presented a draft document, whose goal was to establish clear criteria for OSAs that are required for PUDs, so that the Planning Commission will not have to start from scratch for each application. Jean and Bonnie indicated that they will present this document for review and approval to the Selectboard at their May 2, 2023 meeting, and Craig said he could attend this meeting too.

We reviewed the proposal, and generally supported the concepts and wording, but agreed to request that wording be added that OSAs should provide positive benefits to the environment. We also confirmed our position that it would not be appropriate to identify the Conservation Commission as the enforcement arm for the town, regarding possible infringements or violations of OSAs – rather, enforcement should be considered to be violations of zoning permits, which are handled initially by the Zoning Administrator. Craig agreed to forward our comments to the PC.

2. Andrus: application for adding an Accessory Dwelling Unit to the interior of their existing pole barn, with no apparent land disturbance. Craig noted that the only natural resource

issue might be whether water quality is protected, so they should obtain a valid state wastewater permit for this new dwelling.

6. Shade Tree Preservation Plan. Joe reported that he met with John Bull to discuss how best to address trees in town road rights-of-way, and then he attended a Selectboard meeting with John Bull. Members of the Selectboard suggested that Joe return to a future SB meeting with a bullet-point presentation of what this plan would entail. We offered to help Joe develop these bullet points.
7. Bat Monitoring, summer 2023. Amy said that it is time to plan for bat monitoring this summer, which we agreed we will discuss at our May or June meeting. Craig said he recently received from Alyssa Bennett the 2023 monitoring data, which he will forward to Commission members.
8. Bridget Butler Bird Walk. Amy said she had reached out to Bridget for her input about leading a bird walk in a season other than spring, and she will fill us in when she hears back from her.
9. Website. Amy said she and Betsy Etchells had already made some modifications. Betsy will Train Amy and Jen on how to manage the site.

10. Commission Member Vacancy. Jen will reach out to Tyler to remind him to contact Pam Cousino about his resignation. We

reviewed and confirmed our general policy about potential new members, which is to request that interested town residents attend one of our meetings, and then request to meet with the SB. Pam usually posts notice of the opening in the Addi Inde, and Craig said he would post it on FPF; the opening is already posted on our webpage.

New Business:

11. UVM NR206. We agreed to consider pursuing a project with the fall class of UVM NR206. We will brainstorm about possible projects at our next meeting.

12. Future topics: Jen suggested that we develop an evening program, or series of speakers, on the topic of climate change. We agreed to discuss at future meetings.

13. Meeting adjourned at 9:05 pm.

14. Next Meeting May 9, 2023 at 7:00 pm. Hybrid mode.

Submitted by Barry Estabrook