

Ferrisburgh Conservation Commission Meeting

May 9, 2023

Minutes APPROVED

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

Members absent: Amy Dohner, Matt Gorton

1. Craig opened the meeting at 7:08 p.m.
2. The April 26, 2023 meeting minutes were moved to be accepted as presented.

3. Town Forest

a. May 6 Boundary walk.

Craig reported that he, Joe, Don, and Barry refreshed the boundary markings on the west boundary with the exception of the steep terrain on the southwest corner, which he said probably was not necessary to mark at this point.

Don guided Brooke Fleischman, the Conservation Nursery Seed Coordinator out of the Intervale Conservation Nursery, to the clay plain forest to see black ash trees. She said that she might return to collect seeds during a heavy mast year. We offered her our help and suggested she contact the UVM NR206.

Craig suggested that we set a date to visit the south and east boundaries. Jen will create a survey on possible weekend dates this summer starting with June.

Don reported that very few invasive plants were observed.

b. Discussion of possible NR206 projects.

Although a final decision was postponed, some suggestions were put forward. Don suggested that the class might do a basic inventory of trees and herbaceous plants. Craig said they might be able to help us with developing objectives for the Management Plan and perhaps determine if Species of Greatest Conservation Need were present and/or if there were ways to manage the forest to protect or encourage them. Jen said that the Town Beach had environmental issues the class could address or perhaps create a Management Plan. Don asked if the town had an Ash Tree Management Plan. Karen suggested they look at wildlife corridors. Craig said that habitat blocks had to be part of the next Town Plan by law and that the class might be able to play a role.

c. Vermont Master Naturalist walk.

Craig and Don accompanied Ian and Chelsea Smiley and Kate Kruesi, who specifically asked to see if they could find a distinct shoreline feature of Glacial Lake Vermont. They could not find any physical features. However, on the May 6 boundary walk Craig observed a bench at an elevation of 565

and 570 feet near the northwest corner of the Town Forest that is a possible feature of the lakeshore.

d. VMN “bio-thon.”

Craig reported that he had heard nothing further from Ian Smiley but we would help them out if we heard in time.

e. State Ecologist Visit.

Craig said that Kate Kruesi is trying to arrange with Robert Zaino, the state’s Natural Community Ecologist, to come into the town forest. Craig will contact Kate.

f. Town Forest Management Plan.

Craig said Robert Zaino, state ecologist, would be a valuable resource for putting together the Master Plan. We also need to establish deadlines and goals for ourselves and to go public once we have a draft. Presentations should be made to the Selectboard and perhaps at Town Meeting.

4. Open Space Agreement.

- a. Generic OSAs: Craig reported that Jean Richardson and Bonnie Barnes presented their generic OSA proposal to the Selectboard, which included the Conservation Commission’s request that OSAs must include an environmental benefit. It was suggested by a Selectboard member that OSAs should also have a public benefit – which could be as broad as aesthetics, or protection/improvement of water quality wildlife habitat, etc. – and would definitely not require public access or public trails. Jean and Bonnie indicated that they

would draft another version, to include this concept. The Selectboard voted to hear from the town attorney before making a decision regarding the proposed generic OSA protocols.

- b. OSA for Mead-Richardson PUD: Neighbors of the proposed Mead/Richardson OSA expressed concerns that this would open OSAs to public parking lots, trails, etc. Jean and Bonnie confirmed that the current proposed OSA for this PUD does not include any public access. Craig requested that the plat be updated to show that the OSA boundary addresses the required riparian buffers by being at least fifty feet away from the pond and stream, and to indicate where the wastewater system on the new lot will go.

5. Shade Tree Preservation Plan.

Joe said that he is working on getting a proposal to the Selectboard.

6. 2023 Bat Monitoring.

Waiting to hear from Amy. Amy will contact the owners of the Ruddy Mill for permission to monitor there.

7. Bridget Butler Bird Walk.

Jen said the Bridget is available July 22 and 23, August 26 and 27, and Labor Day. Jen will include possible dates on a survey and will ask Amy if Bridgett has any open dates in the fall.

8. Member Vacancy.

Tyler Steff has sent notice of his resignation to the Selectboard. Craig said he would endeavor to see if anyone from West Ferrisburgh had interest, since we currently have no members from that part of town. He also hopes to attract younger members.

9. Future Programs.

Jen suggested we sponsor programs related to climate change in our area. Craig said he could see two evening programs this fall: One on the science of climate change, another on the cultural and management and human impacts. The University of Vermont has many experts who might do it, including Leslie-Ann Dupigny-Giroux the State Climatologist. Another person to approach is Bill McKibben. Jen will contact Leslie-Ann. Craig will contact someone on the Resilience Committee and on the Regional Planning Commission about other possible speakers.

10. Meeting Adjourned at 9:00 pm.

11. Next meeting June 13, 2023 at 7:00 pm. Hybrid mode.

Submitted by Barry Estabrook