

Ferrisburgh Conservation Commission Meeting

October 10, 2023

Minutes-Approved

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

Members absent: Joe Nelson, Jen Cirillo, Matt Gorton

1. Craig opened the meeting at 7:15 p.m.
2. The September 12, 2023 minutes were accepted as amended.
3. Town Forest
 - a. Vermont Master Naturalist Program, town forest team: Craig reported that he had received nothing new from them.
 - b. Boundary walk: Amy said she will contact Joe and Matt about doing it on October 28 or 29. If they cannot, it will be postponed until Spring 2024.
 - c. Botanical Foray: Craig will resend the report he received to Commission members, but that he did not see anything in the report that would help preparation of the Management Plan.
 - d. Management Plan: Don said that the current work of the NR4060 students is unlikely to produce information about the Town Forest that we don't already know about. He said that the Commission should consider hiring a professional forester to put together the plan. Don mentioned that Joe would be a good resource, and Craig mentioned that there probably are VT ANR personnel who

could assist in setting management goals and/or writing the management plan. Craig said that we should look into any available grants for hiring a professional to assist us. In any case, we should come up with management goals and objectives either at an upcoming meeting, or perhaps we should wait until the Vermont Master Naturalist group provides their report. Amy will send commission members a list of grants and the organizations that offer them so that we can determine which we might apply for and who will prepare the applications. Don suggested that one management goal should be for the town forest to be a place of study.

- e. Signage: Don said the idea of a trailhead sign-in box would give information about who is using the trail that might be useful in applying for grants. Craig mentioned that building a kiosk might be a project for an Eagle Scout. Don noted that Williams Woods in Charlotte has small directional signs with arrows along the trail. Something similar might be of value on the Town Forest trails.

4. UVM4060:

Don reported that the students had created a proposal, which he will circulate to commission members. They are proposing to evaluate and map the forest habitat blocks throughout town, to assist the Planning Commission with the update of the Town Plan in light of the requirements of Act 171. They have started making some maps. Jean Richardson will talk to them about land-use planning. He and Joe will continue to meet with them this fall, and they are planning a drive-around of town on Oct. 24. Craig volunteered to accompany them, if Joe and Don are not available. Their final report will be presented at UVM. Don will let the Conservation Commission as well as the Planning Commission, Zoning

Board, and Select Board know the date, time and location that the report will be presented.

5. Zoning Board:

Craig said there he did not see any significant natural resource issues pertaining to the zoning applications by Hinsdale (No. 23-095), Francheschetti (No. 23-107), or Gracie (No. 23-111). The next Zoning Board meeting is scheduled for November 1, and items have not been posted yet.

6. Planning Commission:

Prange-Martindale PUD: Craig reported that he and Don had joined the Planning Commission on their recent site visit. There is a stream with a sloping wooded riparian zone and well-used wildlife corridor at the back of the property. He said he would write up and circulate a draft report to submit to the Planning Commission saying that the forest, stream and wildlife corridor would be very appropriate and important to be conserved, and also recommending that all buildings should be no closer than 100 feet from the conserved boundary, outdoor lighting on the west side of buildings should be limited and down-directed, and that we encourage not allowing off-leash dogs in the conserved area. He would base other language on that used in the Mead-Richardson PUD.

7. Possible Climate Presentation:

Jen had mentioned in an email that she is involved with the Vermont Energy Education Program [VEEP], which is offering to provide presentations on climate science. We discussed, and thought that a science-based presentation

might not be the appropriate next presentation that we would sponsor, since that could be redundant to State Climatologist Lesley-Ann Dupigny-Gignoux's recent presentation. We agreed that perhaps the next climate presentation should focus on concrete climate actions that townspeople and our town government could take. Craig suggested that we confer with the town's Climate and Energy Committee. We agreed to invite the Climate and Energy Committee to attend a future Conservation Commission meeting to map out our goals. Craig will follow-up with Jen.

8. VT ANR State and Local Government Municipal Day, in Oct.

Craig said that this annual presentation of multiple workshops is very worthwhile, and urged commission members to attend. The commission probably has money in the budget to cover the registration fee.

9. Spring Birding Outing / Presentation

Amy will check the budget to see if we have funds available to pay a presenter's fee before contacting Bridget Butler about a bird-walk date next spring. Amy said she would send commission members information on the budget. Amy will contact Bridget Butler to see whether her spring schedule is filling up. We could also contact other presenters or organizations about leading a birding walk.

We also discussed a separate walk or presentation this spring in the town forest to focus on avian habitat and possible management tools to support them. Possible organizations to contact might be Vermont Audubon, Vermont Center for Ecostudies, or others. Craig will approach Vermont Audubon.

10. Meeting adjourned 8:54 p.m.

11. Next meeting November 14, 2023. Hybrid mode.

Submitted by Barry Estabrook