

Ferrisburgh Conservation Commission Meeting

December 12, 2023

Minutes Approved

Members present (all 8): Craig Heindel, Don Dewees, Barry Estabrook, Karen Pettersen, Matt Gorton, Joe Nelson, Jen Cirillo, Amy Dohner

Members absent: None

1. Craig opened the meeting at 7:05 p.m.
2. 2023-11-14 minutes approved as presented.
3. Budget Update: According to Amy, we have a balance of \$1,018.00.
4. Town Plan:
 - A. Craig said that a detailed discussion of changes to the current Town Plan is needed and that we should schedule time for it during the January meeting. He added that Jean Richardson is looking to the Commission for serious input particularly regarding Section 3.1 and Section 4.1 G. He asked that members of the Committee review those sections in preparation for the January 2024 meeting. We should determine whether the points are (1) up to date, (2) can be deleted, and (3) require inclusion of new information. He reminded the Commission to think in terms of strong wording and to avoid loose words like “encouraged,” “should,” and “could,” which do not stand up to legal scrutiny. He said that a final draft of the Plan should be ready by summer. Involving outside contractors to develop recommendations was a possibility if necessary.
 - B. UVM NR4060 and Act 171: The students have prepared the maps required by the Act. Matt said he would circulate pdfs of the maps to the Commission along with other appropriate material. Craig will have the maps printed in a large format in time for the January meeting.
5. Town Forest:
 - A. Joe reported that he had reached out to Andrea Shortsleeve of the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department to invite her to accompany us on a walk in the forest in Spring 2024 to determine if she had any input to offer on the Management Plan update.
 - B. Joe said that the local snowmobile club Sled Heads had requested permission from the selectboard, and him as Tree Warden, to cut some hazard trees near the trail in the Town Forest. Joe reviewed and approved the work.
 - C. We wondered if the snowmobile club has made their annual request to the Selectboard to use the trail this winter, or to make alterations or do construction on the trail. Joe said he will check on the status.

- D. Bird Habitat: Craig said he had contacted Audubon Vermont. They can provide an expert who would visit the Town Forest with an eye to incorporating avian habitat concepts into the Management Plan. Craig will fill out and submit the appropriate application form to request their input.
- 6. Applications to the Zoning Board and Planning Commission: Craig said that he did not know of any zoning applications that might have natural resource impacts.
- 7. Talks and Presentations:
 - A. Jen will contact the Vermont Energy Education Program and the town Climate Committee about co-sponsoring a public talk about actions town residents can take to deal with climate change.
 - B. Jen proposed that the Commission reach out to Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition, to see if they would like to co-sponsor a presentation on watershed, wetlands, or climate topics relating to agriculture.
- 8. Shade Tree Preservation Plan. Joe reported that the committee had had two meetings and made progress in defining what would constitute a shade tree under the Plan. The plan will also address issues such as shade trees' value for aesthetics and wildlife habitat. It will also cover the planting and maintenance of shade trees. Joe will let us know if the Commission can help in any way.
- 9. Spring Bird Outing: Amy will set something up with Bridget Butler (who is now only doing "slow birding") for May or June 2024.
- 10. New Business:
 - A. Craig noted that there is a vacancy to fill on the Commission and asked whether we should post it.
 - B. Amy said we should think about developing a 2024 spending plan.
- 11. The meeting adjourned at 8:26 p. m.
- 12. Next meeting: January 9, 2024, hybrid mode.

Submitted by Barry Estabrook