

Ferrisburgh Conservation Commission Meeting

September 10, 2024

Minutes Approved

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

Remote: none

Members Absent: Matt Gorton

Other attendees: none

1. Craig opened the meeting at 7:06 p.m.
2. Draft minutes of 2024-06-11 were read and approved as amended.
3. Treasurer's Report: Amy will assemble the most recent figures and report back at the October 8, 2024 meeting. 4.
4. Town Forest:
 - a. Access Trail.
 - Don reported that the August work crew had cut brush and cleared the path. He said that he and Barry had spent an afternoon chain sawing the three trees that had fallen across the trail.
 - Don said he marked both the access trail and the trail inside the forest as far as the junction with the snowmobile trail with small metal directional arrows.

-He also walked down the snowmobile trail and saw no signs of invasive plants.

-In addition, Don walked up into the woods to the north of the junction with the snowmobile trail. The area might be a good location for a trail to the ridge in the northwestern part of the forest.

-He suggested we discuss the topic of trails in the Town Forest in depth at a future meeting. Craig said the Commission's primary focus should be preservation of the unique features of the forest, but that well-routed trails would not conflict with that.

-Don said that we should bring the Ferrisburgh Trails Committee into the discussions and invite members to future work sessions.

-Craig said that the Commission should first create informal trails into new areas to see how they functioned before doing major work.

-Joe said that the issue of trails should be addressed in the Town Forest Master Plan.

-Craig suggested that we do a walk-through with an eye toward possible trail routes after leaf-off.

-Don said we needed to do some slight improvement of the slope on the access trail that angles up from the first creek crossing toward the briar patch clearing.

- b. Ferrisburgh Day: September 15. Craig will lead a hike into the Forest. Joe and Don will accompany him. The hike will begin at the Robinson Road parking area at 9:00 AM. Craig said that possible participants have been warned that the trail is challenging and that no dogs are allowed.
- c. Fall Work Day. We will aim for Saturday October 19 at 9:00 AM at the Robinson Road parking area. Rain days will be Friday the 18th or Sunday the 20th. We will begin at the southeast corner of the forest and work westward along the southern boundary, marking the boundary and looking for invasive plants—removing those that we can.

- d. Invasives Workshop with Nature Conservancy: Joe suggested we put the workshop in hold until after the October work day when we would have a better idea of what we need from the Conservancy.
- e. Town Forest Master Plan:
 - Craig said that for the time being, we should focus our efforts on the Conservation Commission's contribution to the Town Plan.
 - Joe will reach out to Brandon Benedict, the Chittenden/Addison County Forester to see what role he might play in helping the Commission to prepare a new master plan. Joe will also discuss Brandon's role in future Town Forest management, including doing an inventory.
- f. Future UVM Student Projects:
 - Craig said we should be thinking this fall about projects for the spring term. The deadline for pitches in in January.
- g. Kiosk: Don has constructed the Town Forest kiosk, and will circulate possible wording for panels on the kiosk to the Commission for editorial input. Craig will create a map for the kiosk that will also be posted with "you are here" indications on the access trail and in the forest interior.

5. Zoning Board and Planning Commission:

-Craig said that there was nothing new to report.

6. Leopold Bench Workshop: Jen said that the workshop would be at Rokeby on October 3. Don will attend to help if needed. At 8:00 AM there will be a birding-focused session; the workshop to build the benches will begin at 10:00 AM and end at 1:00 PM.

Presentation: Jen will talk to the Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition and Addison County River Watch about a possible fall presentation regarding agriculture and water quality. Craig said we should inform the groups that we are eager to participate this fall.

1. New Business: Amy proposed a talk on bobolink conservation, Jen will do more research with an eye to putting something on in the spring.

Meeting Adjourned 8:32 PM.

Next Meeting October 8, 2024 at Town Hall and on Zoom.