

# **Ferrisburgh Conservation Commission Meeting**

**February 13, 2024**

## **Minutes Approved**

Members present in person: Craig Heindel, Barry Estabrook, Jen Cirillo. No one logged in remotely. We did not have a quorum of 4, based on quorum being more than half of seven current members = 4].

Members Absent: Matt Gorton, Joe Nelson, Don Dewees, Amy Dohner

Guest: Clark Hinsdale

1. Craig opened the meeting at 7:08 p. m.
2. Minutes from the meetings of January 9 and January 30, 2024 were provisionally approved as presented – but we can't formally approve them tonight, since no quorum.
3. Pierce Woods / Lewis Creek and Route 7 Projects: Clark Hinsdale discussed three projects, all of which have conservation opportunities. He attended our meeting as a private citizen, not as Selectboard Chair.
  - A. The first project is the 64.8-acre tract directly across Route 7 from Rokeby Museum, which Clark said he recently purchased. The parcel is a mixture of agricultural land [northern portion], and clay plain forest, streams, and wetlands [southern portion], with an archeological site that is likely to be the remnants of Mingo Niles' cabin, a free black man who worked for the Robinson family in the mid-1870s. Clark is working on a management plan for the property, which would likely include conservation elements.
  - B. A second project includes portions of the former Shlansky/Pierce Woods project, and Irene Pierce's property, both along Lewis Creek west of Route 7. David Shlansky [Ferrisburgh Realty Investors, LLC] is pursuing a modification of the former Pierce Woods development that would be accessed from Stage Rd., for a slightly smaller and more compact proposed PUD – possibly about 20 lots, clustered on about 12 acres near Stage Rd. Ms. Pierce owns adjacent land in this vicinity, and is also

pursuing subdivision approval. Clark has [a portion of?] Ms. Pierce's land under contract. He is proposing that land on both sides of Lewis Creek could be preserved, to protect its values as a wildlife corridor, wetland, and riparian zone. Clark had sent an email dated Jan. 20, 2024 to leadership of Lewis Creek Association [board chair Andrea Morgante], Vermont Land Trust [Allen Karnatz], Ferrisburgh Trails Committee [chair Courtney Kanetzky] and Craig Heindel [chair, Ferrisburgh Conservation Commission] describing the conservation opportunities that he is pursuing regarding both properties. He asked if the Commission would be interested in participating in an informal advisory group. Commission members discussed; we concluded that the town's Conflict of Interest policy would not prevent our involvement, because it appears that it only applies in the situation where a town official might benefit in a financial manner – that would not apply, in this instance. Commission members present expressed interest in the CC participating in an advisory group, so we agreed that the Commission would take up Clark's request at our next regularly-scheduled meeting on March 12, 2024.

C. The third project that Clark discussed is a two-lot commercial subdivision of 12 acres of the eastern portion of the former Pierce Woods property now owned by Irene Pierce, on which he also has a contract. This area is located east of the unnamed tributary of Lewis Creek that flows southward from Stage Rd. Clark expressed his interest in conserving the riparian zone of this parcel, along the eastern side of this stream. Clark indicated that a developer is proposing the details of this commercial development [Jonathan Couture]. We expressed our interest and informal support of this concept, and discussed some details of a simple boundary line for this riparian zone easement. We will participate in Planning Commission and ZBA hearings on this project, as appropriate and as Commission members are available.

4. Town Plan: Craig said he combined the suggested changes and updates made by Don and other Commission members to Sections 3.1 [Natural Resources; descriptions] and the first two sub-sections of Section 4.1 [Natural Resources Policies]. He had to insert our comments on Section 3.1 into the PDF format [that's all that is currently available], which is very

cumbersome, hard to view, and makes a very large file size [30 – 40 MBs]. Craig will pursue getting the text in Word format. We need to continue to review and provide comments about the rest of Section 4.1. We agreed with Jen's suggestion that the layout and topics in the Natural Resources Policies Section 4.1 should more exactly track the sub-sections of Section 3.1 – they do not, now. Craig will update Jean and Bonnie.

5. Treasurer's Report: The Commission has \$1,010.71 in its account.
  
6. Mid-Champlain Valley Regional Conservation Partnership, Leopold bench project: Jen will tell them that the Commission is interested in participating, and would like more details on what they would like us to do. For example, we could assist with advertising and public notices.
  
7. Web site: Follow up with Amy to see if she is still able to update it.
  
8. Town Forest Management Plan: Joe has arranged an April 24 site walk starting at 1 pm with Andrea Shortsleeve, Private Lands Habitat Biologist with Vermont Fish and Wildlife. Craig will suggest to Vermont Audubon that their representative take part on that walk.
  
9. Zoning and Planning Commission applications: Craig and others had nothing to report. We agreed that we would try to participate in the Feb. 21 hearing on the Couture/Hinsdale two-lot commercial development, but we noted that none of us are available that evening.
  
10. Spring Birding Outing with Bridget Butler: Amy will confirm date with Bridget.

11.Trails Committee signage: The Commission will coordinate with the Trails Committee – we could certainly use standardized signs for the access trail to the Town Forest.

12.Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition presentation: Jen said that Brooke Small, the organization’s development program manager, will look for a possible speaker, possibly about agriculture best practices and/or new research related to surface water quality.

13.Meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

14.Next meeting: March 12, 2024, 7:00 p.m, hybrid.

Submitted by Barry Estabrook