

**Conservation Commission of the Town of Halifax, Vermont: Meeting Minutes****7:00 pm, Tuesday, April 23, 2019**

Present: Jessica Cooney (JC), Stephan Chait (SC), Linda Huebner (LH), Laurel Copeland (LC)

Absent: Juniper Kozlowski (JK)

1. Formation of the commission
  - a. Stephan Chait distributed written materials explaining Vermont conservation commissions.
  - b. Select Board decided to have this commission based on a recommendation from the Planning Commission. In the Town Plan approved March 5, 2019, see Town Government Recommendation, number 3 on page 45.
  - c. The Conservation Commission of Vermont towns is governed by Title 24, Ch 118, sections 4501-4506 of Vermont Statutes (Stephan provided hard copies of this section. Full text is online at: <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/chapter/24/118>)
  - d. The commission can have 3-9 members. Members are appointed by the of the Town of Halifax. Each member has a 4-year term, except the first members, whose terms will vary in length so there is less turnover each year thereafter.
  - e. The commission needs to establish meeting times; and annually to elect Chair, Clerk, and Treasurer. The commission has the right to receive money and accept donations of property.
  - f. Robbin Gabriel established the website for the Conservation Commission and posted the proposed schedule of meetings, currently 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays at 7 pm. Members concurred with the times and discussed increasing or decreasing meeting frequency as needed.
  - g. The Conservation Commission is advisory only; it works with other commission in the Town: Planning, Zoning, Road, for example.
2. Mission Statement
  - a. SC reviewed Marlboro, Dummerston, Guilford, Brattleboro statements
  - b. Halifax Conservation Commission has no budget from Town
  - c. Conservation Commissions promote community responsibility & stewardship for the environment and education about natural resources. Some conservation commissions specify agricultural or cultural as well as natural resources.
  - d. Draft one for our Cons Comm [JC]
3. Association of Vermont Conservation Commission (AVCC) has tiny grants -- \$100's. We could apply.
  - a. Step 1 = join AVCC (\$50/year), Step 2=apply for tiny grant
4. Act 171 – wildlife habitat linkage; see map; linkages include Gaspe Peninsula through Adirondacks, Green, and White Mts. Learn more about this. [LH]
5. Act 64 – water, roadway management: currently steep ditches and a certain kind of stone – very expensive & time-consuming. Learn of other approaches from other CC. [SC]
  - a. Green River Watershed Alliance (GRWA; Green River provides Greenfield drinking supply): Given the Green River has very high quality water, one topic to examine is the re-classification of the river.

- b. SC asked Patty Dow if Conservation Commission can have a little space for written materials related to conservation
  - c. Learn about Conservation Easements. Members voted 4:0 to put this off.
6. Inventories
  - a. How is the work coordinated? What's been done already? What does one look like? Hogback Mountain Conservation Area just completed their Biodiversity Inventory (online on their site, <https://hogbackvt.org>). LC will ask Sue Kelly about what exists in terms of inventory that already exists. Can ask other CC for an example of a Town inventory. LC will try to get an example and find out what exists already. [LC]
7. New Business
  - a. There is a **kickoff meeting** for \$35k grant regarding SE VT Linkage Conservation Collaboration on April 30 5:30-7:30 (Tuesday) at Marlboro College, Snyder Arts bldg. Magnet Classroom. Please try to attend.
  - b. **Windham County Natural Resources Conservation District**, Joint Conservation Commissions & Groups, has semi-annual meetings of area CC's. There was one April 17<sup>th</sup> in Guilford. Next one will be in the fall 2019 in Marlboro. Their events organization is: Windham Conservation Events, 28 Vernon St Ste 332, Brattleboro, VT 05301-3668. Browse to the Natural Resource Conservation District (NRCD) mailchimp site (<http://eepurl.com/gn5YOD>) to sign up for the email list. There may be confusion between the new Halifax Conservation Commission and an older private organization, the Halifax Conservation Group.
  - a. **Open Meeting Act** – 3 or more commission members may not discuss commission issues outside a public meeting. Outside discussion includes email. Review online. Some site are: <https://www.vlct.org/municipal-assistance/municipal-topics/vermonts-open-meeting-law>, <https://www.sec.state.vt.us/media/514454/A-GUIDE-TO-OPEN-MEETINGS.pdf>.
  - b. **We will elect** Chair & Clerk next meeting [LC's reading of the statute suggests we shall elect a Treasurer, too]
  - c. **Dark Skies** initiative will be added to the Conservation Commission agenda
8. Adjourned: 8:21 PM