

Conservation Commission of the Town of Halifax, Vermont: Meeting Minutes

July 23, 2019

Present: Stephan Chait (SC), Laurel Copeland (LC), Linda Huebner (LH), Dov Towler (DT), Jessica Cooney (JC), Diana Todd (DT2; guest speaker), Patti Smith (SP) and Matthew

Meeting convened 7:05 pm

1. **Minutes** - Voted to approve previous meeting minutes, of June 26, 2019.
2. **Online Mapping Resources and Use in Conservation Inventories** – Presenter: Diana Todd. President of the Hogback Mountain Conservation group, and an amateur mapmaker (studied cartography). Works with Town to keep parcel map up to date. Happy to work with us if we need maps.
 - a. Hand-out on “Online Mapping Resources” – can use state databases to start out your local inventory. But all resources are incomplete.
 - b. Big Picture level vs Species level – e.g., driving down Hanson Road and noting a change from mostly maples to conifers.
 - c. Example “anra5” shows Deer Wintering Areas in Halifax which maps where these areas are likely to occur based on available parameters.
 - d. Example on “BioFinder2016” includes rare animals and plants – species level – shows the 2 rare species that have been reported but doesn’t tell you what they were. There are many choices on this website besides rare species. As another example of info quality, in Marlboro off the Butterfield, there is an Uncommon Species of Animal which turns out to be Heron Rookery – but it’s shown at Jenckes Farm (location of reporting person) whereas the herons are at a lake off in the woods. On BioFinder2016, you can add layers of information by checking the boxes of interest. See companion manual, Mapping Vermont’s Natural Heritage. It includes a CD.
 - e. Play with the maps on BioFinder2016 to see what else is available. Also, Quick Tools has fun features, such as Zoom To A Town. Note the 2 tabs at bottom left: Home and Layers.
 - f. Atlas of Natural Resources – ANR – the parent site has more choices than BioFinder2016. New at top left is choice of datasets, one of which is BioFinder2016. Try clicking “all layers” to pick and choose (check and uncheck boxes).
3. 7:35 pm Patti Smith and Matt (?) arrived. We paused Diana’s presentation.
4. Patti Smith – works with LH at BEEC; works with Green River Watershed Alliance. Looking for beech mast stands (bears) in the GRW, also wetlands and other things. Needs landowner permissions. Can we help? DT said he lives on the Green River near the old mill. Old County goes to PS’s dad’s house (but it’s closed to cars). Has names & addresses from Grand List but no response to letters (and some email & telephone contacts). SC noted that Lewis Sumner might be very useful. PS will email us with landowner names and a brief description of what she is inventorying. DT noted that state land says all lands are open unless posted. JC suggested searching on social media.
5. 8:03 Diana resumed. Hill Shade layer shows old cellar holes and stone walls. Now let’s turn to some sites where you can input data. iNaturalist can be used to inform others about invasives you find, to find out who’s interested in nature in your town, and to identify species. www.vtinvasives.org shows what species have invaded Vermont. Can search for name of plant, etc. Choosing “map of invasives” sends you back to iNaturalist.

Vermont Center for Geographic Information <https://vcgi.vermont.gov> has demographic and economic data among other data types. (DT2 could make you a map of multiple data types.) <http://geodata.vermont.gov>

6. **Old Business: Cultural Resources** – Dov’s friend Rich Holschuh can come speak to us for about a half hour. It was suggested that we could coordinate with the Halifax Historical Society to prepare an informative event about cultural resources in Halifax.
7. **Old Business: Recycling hazardous materials** – contact Windham Solid Waste. How do we communicate information to the Town? Mailing...costs money. Stephan Chait has met Bob Spencer a few times and could talk with him about how to provide information to Halifax residents. Lewis Sumner and Cara Cheyette are the town representatives on Windham Solid Waste Management. Some recycling efforts can get difficult.
8. **Old Business: Wildlife Connectivity** -- WWCP will meet on July 31st at 5 pm in Brattleboro Hooker Dunham Building (Ground Floor), 139 Main Street, Brattleboro VT 05301.
9. **New Business: Thurber Road Trail** – SC attended Select Board meeting where closure was requested by Conway/MacLean family & discussed; it seemed like a neighbor dispute; no decision yet. The Select Board should be deciding on the basis of the best use of town resources and not to resolve a dispute between neighbors.
10. **Old Business: Inventories** – no additional comments beyond tonight’s presentation.
11. **Old Business: Dark Skies** – There are 8 street lights in Halifax; could work with power company to get more energy-efficient bulbs. The CC could talk with the Planning Commission and its Energy Committee about directing the light.
12. **Old Business: Invasive Wild Parsnips (LH)** – LC had circulated some observations of Wild Parsnips in Halifax, Marlboro, and Wilmington.
13. **Old Business: Halifax Conservation Commission on Social Media** – SC wants any email to be for the CC (not private email addresses). JC would use social media to get the word out.
14. **Old Business: Logo** – JC proposed the Commission choose a logo. She presented a few preliminary ideas and will bring more to a subsequent meeting. Please add this item to future agenda.
15. **Open Meeting Law questions** – providing information by email (e.g., about wild parsnips) is fine as long as we do not conduct business (make any decisions) on email.

Meeting adjourned 8:45 pm