

**Conservation Commission of the Town of Halifax, Vermont: Meeting
Minutes (DRAFT)
May 28, 2019**

Present: Jessica Cooney (JC), Stephan Chait (SC), Dov Towler (DT), Laurel Copeland (LC)

Absent: Linda Huebner (LH)

MEETING CONVENED 7:00 PM

1. Conservation Commission Organization

- a. Members – Juniper Kozlowski resigned for lack of time; David (Dov) Towler was appointed by the Select Board
- b. Election of the Chair, Clerk, and Treasurer – the members present agreed it would be best to postpone this action until all 5 members are present and have gotten acquainted
- c. Open Meeting Law (SC) – Stephan introduced the Barlow slides on Vermont's Open Meeting Law (VOML). Barlow is available to come speak to the Commission, should we feel the need. The members discussed the major points of VOML: a quorum of our commission of 5 members is any 3 members; a quorum of the commission must not discuss commission business outside of a warned and open meeting. Warning means we tell the public in advance that a meeting will occur, and when and where it will be. Open means the public can attend. As an example of a violation of the VOML, an email exchange discussing the business of the commission among 3-5 members would NOT be open because the public cannot see the exchanges or participate in them. Meeting and talking about other things, as at a social event, would be fine.

2. Mission Statement

- a. Draft Mission Statement (JC) – Jessica presented her draft statement and alternative components from various other conservation commission mission statements. The members liked the statement. Discussion included LH's suggested revision, and LC's question as to whether non-natural features of the Town need to be alluded to. JC will present a revised draft at the next meeting.
- b. Outreach to and Communications with other Conservation Commissions, Windham Regional Commission, and Others – High Meadows awarded Windham Regional, led by Emily Davis, a 2-year, \$35,000 grant to work on a Windham Wildlife Connectivity Project (WWCP). All but 2 towns are included because of the wilderness areas in the county. Halifax has the largest contiguous piece of wilderness on the map. The kickoff meeting was April 30th. Linda & Laurel attended. The 2-year project involves 11 deliverables. Laurel will circulate her notes from that evening by email. Stephan will circulate a copy of the funded proposal by email. **WWCP wants at least one member from our conservation commission to attend each of their meetings.** The next meeting seems to be **June 5th** but location is unknown [UPDATE: Marlboro Community Center at 5:30 pm].

3. Discussion of Topics

- a. Act 171 – Protection of Forest Blocks and Habitat Connectors, Windham Habitat Connectivity Collaborative (LH & LC) – we reviewed Linda's notes on Act 171 briefly

- b. Act 64 – Vermont Clean Water Act, **Resilient Roads and Watershed Forum will be June 13 at 6 pm in the Halifax Community Hall** (20 Brook Road, West Halifax). Act 64 was passed, unfunded. Now what? A year ago in May 2018, 4 persons from Halifax (Lewis, Brad, Robbin, Stephan) attended the Green River Watershed Alliance meeting led by Emily Davis from Windham Regional Commission; Marie Caputo presented a stream table (model of water flow and erosion) and discussed the methodology of using ditches and stone. To control road runoff, right now, the state of Vermont requires deep ditches lined with a certain kind of stone. This work is expensive, many motorists dislike the scary steep ditches when roads are slippery, and many landowners dislike the destruction of stone walls and general encroachment from roadway into bounding property. Is there a better way to deal with runoff? Attend the meeting June 13, 2019 in West Halifax at the Community Hall at 6pm.
 - c. Inventories of Natural Resources (LC) – Laurel did a little research into what a conservation commission inventory might look like. An inventory can have maps and lists with details. Items covered may be natural or manmade, e.g., water (ponds, streams, marshes, pools, gorges), land (field, forest, wetland, rock), plants (tree types, flowers, shrubs), animals (types & numbers), roads (dirt, paved, disused), ruins (cellar holes, mill abutments), historical buildings (halls, houses, other). Laurel will distribute a list by email. The inventory will take months to assemble. Laurel emailed some people for help and examples.
 - d. Dark Skies (LC) – this is a complex initiative that educates and assists the community to reduce nighttime artificial lighting and redirect lighting downward so as to improve viewing of the nighttime sky.
4. **Other Business** –
- a. Trails & Road Reclassification is an important topic (SC)
 - b. Porcupine with injury led JC to connect with Patti Smith, a certified wildlife rehabilitator who specializes in porcupines. Patti lives in Marlboro on Moss Hollow Road with a lot of possums in her living room. The porcupine died, apparently of a neural disorder. Patti did a necropsy. JC distributed a map and list of Vermont Wildlife Rehabilitators.
 - c. Trail for Kids (JC) – a disused trail exists behind the school, dedicated to Mr Ackerman, whom Laurel believes was a beloved naturalist who died suddenly; contact Marshal Case. Restoring the trail would be lovely. A bridge over Branch River will be needed.
 - d. The members quickly revisited the topic of Chair / Clerk / Treasurer to review duties of those offices. Chair is responsible for organizing meetings, preparing an agenda in advance, warning the public of the meeting time & place & agenda, and being a contact for other groups and persons. The Chair does not have to be the representative of the commission for all events and interactions but can designate or request volunteer representative(s) as the need arises.

MEETING ADJOURNED 8:13 PM