

**THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION
TOWN OF HALIFAX, P.O. BOX 127
WEST HALIFAX, VT 05358**

Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes from Tuesday, August 25, 2020

CALL TO ORDER at 6:34 pm outside the Town Clerk office

Present: Stephan Chait (SC, chair), Jessica Cooney (JC, member), Linda Huebner (LH, member), Dov Towler (DT, member), Laurel Copeland (LC, member), Andrea Rand (AR), David Erickson (DE)

CHANGES AND/OR ADDITIONS TO AGENDA – none

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES – July 28, 2020 Regular Meeting Minutes – LH moved to accept & JC seconded; 4 ayes, 1 abstention

NEW BUSINESS

Rogers Berm Removal – Update – On Green River Road just before Perry Road is a berm that was damaged in 2011 during Tropical Storm Irene. The Connecticut River Conservancy (contact: Kathy Urffer) planned to award contract by 8/17/2020 to repair the berm so the Green River can move into its flood plain. A site visit has held on 8/7/2020 and was attended by 3 contractors, SC, and Brad Rafus. The plan seems environmentally sound.

Beavers – Educational Program for the Community – LH has talked with both Skip Lisle (Beaver Deceiver) and Patti Smith (BEEC) about beavers in Halifax. The town added a drainage ditch at the top of Pennell Hill Road to solve the immediate problem there (water flowing over the road). A pipe needs to be added; Skip will get to it when he can. Patti is willing to do personalized programs about beavers for small groups as large groups are not feasible during the coronavirus pandemic. SC: The Green River Watershed Alliance led by Margo Ghia of the Windham Regional Commission has obtained a Watershed Grant. The project team wants to do three programs on community concerns about beavers. They also want to help Towns develop nonlethal policies regarding beaver-community conflict. Margo is seeking ideas and wants to work with Conservation Commissions in Windham. They have a little money for community outreach (\$1000). DE suggested Front Porch Forum, FaceBook, and the like as they are good for communications consisting of three bullets and a nice graphic that could reach people. AR asked how did the beavers get removed last time? Discussion on what may have happened and why education is important to help shift attitudes. Negative sentiments need to be counterbalanced with information on benefits that come from beavers and with easy ways to protect trees, sewer systems, etc. Kids like to watch the beavers build their dam here in West Halifax. The school is nearby (playing fields about the swampy area where the beavers are). Restoring the trail along the waterway would also help in having access to an outside learning area. Vegetation on the trail is very dense right now, making restoration difficult. JC offered to make a few images and FaceBook ads with information bullets about beavers. FaceBook ad pricing is complex; min \$5. DE said he has worked in communication in communities that are hostile to wildlife issues. There was a question on whether the beaver pond could be converted into a conservation area; this seems unlikely as it is within the Village District of Halifax. LH noted that people relax about beavers if someone else pays for the Beaver Deceivers and other efforts to protect things the people don't want to lose. DE asked if there an inventory of beaver locations in Town? None is known. There was some discussion about developing that resource. DE will pursue it.

ACTION items: JC will look into FaceBook ads. LH gave Skip's brochure about Beaver Deceivers to SC; Vermont Fish & Wildlife might have additional resources. DE will look into an inventory of beaver locations. LC will prepare articles for the Halifax newsletter to provide information about the benefits of beavers along with pictures. AR will forward an op-ed she wrote on the topic to LC.

School Letter – Outside Learning Area – Sandy Pentak-Cohen needs help with cleaning & clearing the nature trail to get to the creek bed area (from the rock with the plaque honoring Bill Ackemann toward the ball field backstop then to the parking lot). School starts September 8th. Who established the trail in Bill Ackemann's

name? DE wondered whether the trail can be a school project for older kids. Perhaps maintenance could be picked up by the eighth graders.

ACTION items: Volunteers from tonight's meeting will meet on Saturday, August 29 at 9 AM in the school parking lot to reconnoiter the trail (bring boots, bug dope, clippers, machetes). JC can ask Marshal Case for his ideas.

OLD BUSINESS

Relocation of Recycling Bins to Town Garage – The bins have been relocated. The area has cameras but is not gated because folks need to access the town hotspot for WiFi at night.

Signage and New Bulletin Board – SC working with WSWMD Athena for signs.

Composting – Education (State Scrap Food Regulations) – SC working with WSWMD.

Windham Solid Waste Management District application to USDA – Update – SC working with WSWMD.

Logo – Update – JC had previously emailed the logo with revised font to all members of the HCC; she can put it on the HCC Facebook page and on the Town of Halifax webpage. SC asked whether it can be put on letterhead, and JC replied that it can.

OTHER BUSINESS – DT raised the issue of nonnative invasive plants, commenting that he saw some phragmites on the corner of Hatch School Road at Hanson Road. It is a perennial, aggressive wetland grass that outcompetes native plants and displaces native animals; it is tall with distinctive, fluffy seed heads (see photo). They should be cut down. LC said that corner is Christina & Bill Moore's property. LC will connect DT with Christina Moore.



SC noted that next month, it will be dark outside when we meet. Options include Zoom/GoToMeeting video/telephone, phone call, or Laurel's mom's barn (very large; lots of chairs; lights). General agreement on the Copeland barn at 1581 Hanson Road, Halifax, at 6:30 pm on 4th Tuesday, September 22.

HEARING OF VISITORS – David Erickson introduced himself. He and his family are living in Halifax this year, and his daughter will attend kindergarten in Halifax. David's business is teaching photography techniques and software use. He has experience in wildlife conservation, sustainable use, and related topics. He is very interested in participating in the community and in the conservation commission.

Andrea Rand described herself as jack of all trades, master of none, schooled in archeology and anthropology. She does a lot of photography especially birds.

ADJOURNMENT – at 7:43 pm.