

CONSERVATION COMMISSION
TOWN OF HALIFAX, P.O. BOX 127, WEST HALIFAX, VT 05358
DRAFT Minutes of Conservation Commission Meeting September 22, 2020
Copeland Barn, 1581 Hanson Road, Halifax, VT

CALL TO ORDER at 6:40 pm. Present: Stephan Chait (SC), Jessica Cooney (JC), Linda Lyon (LL), Andrea Rand (AR), Linda Huebner (LH), David Erickson (DE), Laurel Copeland (LC).

CHANGES AND/OR ADDITIONS TO AGENDA: None.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

August 25, 2020 Regular Meeting Minutes: approved with corrected spelling of “Ackemann”

NEW BUSINESS

School Outside-Learning Area – Report on Site Visit of August 30th: JC talked with Sandy Pentak-Cohen after the Conservation Commission’s site visit and clean-up work. Initially school administrators had wanted the trail into the wetlands restored entirely, but JC expressed our concerns over the large scope of restoration and potential hazards. They will get back to us. Sandy is interested in beaver education. Sandy would like volunteer muscle from the Conservation Commission to clear the original trail as much as possible.

The CC could present the documents by DE and LC summarizing the site visit to Sandy. DE’s observations about the condition of the trail and surrounding area may be useful.

ACTION ITEMS: SC & LC will draft the cover letter and convey the documents to Sandy P-C.

Beavers Educational Program – Cooperation with Green River Watershed Alliance – GRWA has a grant for ~\$1000 for programs. At a meeting of the GRWA, Margot Ghia (Windham Regional Commission), SC and Patti Smith agreed to meet to discuss options for educational programs given the limits imposed by the pandemic. Patti Smith and an intern at the Windham Regional Commission have held such an event in the past. Margot, Stephan and Patti will discuss how to use materials from that presentation in the current situation. The CC has \$500 approved by the Select Board; we could use it for mailing, for example.

A good-looking flyer / handout could be posted to all households or to all property owners. We could ask GRWA whether they have non-profit bulk mail option.

VANR F&W flyer:

<https://vtfishandwildlife.com/sites/fishandwildlife/files/documents/Learn%20More/Library/FACTSHEETS/FURBEARER%20AND%20TRAPPING/BMP%20BEAVER%20CONFLICTS%20BROCHURE.pdf>

We could have a table at the March Town Meeting.

We could have a table at the 2021 Halifax Celebration.

Do other towns in Vermont have beaver policies? If so, we could adapt existing policy to Halifax. Does the Southern Vermont Natural History Museum in Marlboro do beaver education?

Regarding the beaver deceiver on Pennell Hill, it is not clear when Skip Lisle can address the issue. It is unclear to the Conservation Commission what the business arrangements for the work are.

In the fall, beavers are deepening their ponds so there will be enough water during the winter freeze. This can cause roadway problems such as the situation on Pennell Hill.

ACTION ITEMS: SC will talk with Patti Smith & Margot Ghia. LH will research town policies about beavers. SC will ask GRWA about bulk mailing. AR will ask Mike Clough whether he has any beaver education programming.

Invasive Plants – Phragmites in Halifax. No update.

OLD BUSINESS

Rogers Berm Removal – Update. This ended up being a modification rather than removal. The rip-rap has been restructured; the berm has a path through it for the water; the water now has somewhere to go. It's on the right before Perry Road as you drive northeast (toward Brattleboro) on Green River Road.

Relocation of Recycling Bins to Town Garage – This happened on August 11th. Signage and New Bulletin Board: Athena no longer works at WSWMD and is moving to Florida. John Fay is the new coordinator. SC hopes to have new signage for Halifax next month.

AR noted that the bins are full (in the new location) so people are leaving bags of cans. LH commented that the \$8000 fines for contaminated recyclables could pay for someone part-time to monitor drop-offs.

Composting – Education (State Scrap Food Regulations) – John Fay gave SC a flyer for Backyard Composting events offered this Sat. Sept. 26 at 9 am and Tue. Sept. 29 at 6 pm (about 1 hour) at Vernon Rec Center, 607 Pond Road. **Questions?** 802-257-0272 x113.

Windham Solid Waste Management District application to USDA – Update. With Athena's departure, this is delayed.

Logo – Update. It is on FaceBook and looks great! JC will email it to everyone.

Four Corners — There are a lot of burnouts (rubber on the road). This is illegal activity (reckless driving); it also leaves rubber on the road that may go into the river. Does anyone know of studies of the ecological impact of this? LH commented she has seen increased use of ATV's which is also adding to the density of reckless driving and added pollution. Perhaps Town Constable Andy Rice would be helpful. Someone called the police, but they were uninterested.

OTHER BUSINESS

LH's term expired. Perhaps one of the three visitors would like to be on the Commission in her place. The process begins with writing to the Select Board expressing interest in serving on the Conservation Commission.

HEARING OF VISITORS

Phragmites. LL was integrated pest management for a while and is happy to advise. She has not seen invasive phragmites in Halifax.

ADJOURNMENT at 8:00 pm.