



**Town of Stowe
Conservation Commission
Monday May 13, 2024
MEETING MINUTES**

A regular meeting of the Conservation Commission was held on Monday May 13, 2024, at 5:30 pm in the Memorial Room of the Stowe Town Office.

Members in Attendance: Jacquie Mauer, Kay Barrett, Catherine Gott, Colleen McGovern, Phillip Branton, and Seb Sweatman. Staff in Attendance: Sarah McShane. Others in Attendance: Brooke Fleischman, Steve Hagenbuch, and Peter Danforth.

Call to Order- J.Mauer called the meeting to order shortly after 5:30 PM.

Public Comments & Adjustments to the Agenda – J.Mauer suggested modifying the agenda to move the river erosion discussion to later in the agenda. C.Gott asked to include a re-cap of Green Up Day. Commission members agreed to the suggested modifications.

Election of Officers & Review Rules of Procedure - Staff assisted in the nomination process and explained the responsibilities of the Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary. P.Branton motioned to nominate J.Mauer as Chair. K.Barrett seconded the motion- the motion passed unanimously. K.Barrett motioned to nominate C.Gott as Vice Chair. C.McGovern seconded the motion- the motion passed unanimously. K.Barrett motioned to nominate C.McGovern as Secretary. The motion was seconded by P.Branton and passed unanimously.

Review Meeting Minutes [03/25/2024] On a motion by C.McGovern, seconded by P.Branton, the minutes of the prior meeting were approved unanimously.

Intervale Conservation Nursery- Seed Collection Request – Mayo Farm

Brooke Fleischman, Seed Coordinator from Intervale Conservation Nursery was present and described her seed collection proposal. She explained that she is scouting locations around Mayo Farm and the Quiet Path to collect Balsam Poplar, Quaking Aspen, and Shrub Willow cuttings- all of which are dispersed by wind. The collection procedures involve gathering small clippings with a pole- collecting approximately 20% of the available pods. She described that Stowe is centrally located- within a seed zone more similar to the Northeast Kingdom. The cuttings are propagated and used for conservation riparian plantings across the state. P.Branton motioned to approve the Intervale's proposal, C.Gott seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Continued Discussion- Sterling Forest Management Plan Update

Steve Hagenbuch – Audubon Forest for the Birds Project

Steve Hagenbuch of Audubon Vermont was in attendance. He explained his prior involvement in Sterling Forest with the Forest for the Birds Project. He explained that he began working on the project in 2010 with Michael Snyder when he was County Forester. Sterling Forest was a formal demonstration site with the goal of managing the forest with birds in mind. He explained the project involved creating improved bird habitat through active forest management. Along Maple Run several patch cuts were created to help encourage early successional forest habitat for specific birds. He explained the different services that Audubon Vermont offers. Members generally discussed the Commission's goals and purpose(s) for preparing updates to the management plan. S.Hagenbuch described the reasons why one might manage

lands, different management types/strategies, and explained that Vermont forests are generally young in forest terms. Members discussed the different management strategies and how actively managed forests help diversify and improve resiliency. Members discussed old growth forests and how if forests are not managed, that is a management decision/strategy itself.

S.Hagenbuch described how birds respond quickly to changes in forests- compositional, structural, and species diversity. He added that by using patch cuts as a management tool it speeds up the natural successional process- a side benefit are the forest products obtained. Members discussed the bird surveys conducted before and after the harvest project along Maple Run. S.Hagenbuch volunteered to complete another bird survey. Early successional forests are generally ten to fifteen years in age; regeneration slows as the forest canopy closes in. Members discussed how homogenized forest negatively impacts wildlife and resilient trees are ones that are vigorously growing with a fuller crown. Members discussed beech bark scale disease. S. Hagenbuch will conduct a bird survey in the coming weeks/month and provide bird based information to help inform the management plan.

Opportunities to Reduce River Erosion -Lamoille Conservation District

Peter Danforth with Lamoille County Conservation District was present. He explained that if the town is interested, the Lamoille County Conservation District could help obtain state and/or federal funding for riparian plantings. Using grant funds, the Town could either hire a contractor to install the plantings or coordinate a volunteer project. P.Danforth shared his recent assessment and different grant options. He showed an aerial image with 50-100ft riparian buffer areas highlighted. He described one possible erosion strategy of a terraced buffer with willow plantings at the toe of the bank and opportunities to open the floodplain and reduce floodwater force. C.McGovern inquired about beavers and whether they impact the design of the planting. Members discussed Moscow Rec Field and recent flooding impacts. S.McShane noted that the Mayo Farm agricultural lands are currently leased and not available but could be revisited when the lease expires. P.Danforth agreed to check out Moscow Rec Fields and damage to the recent riparian plantings.

Friends of the Winooski- Water Quality Testing Project

S.McShane distributed sampling bottles and field information sheets. Members agreed to sample the assigned sites and drop off collected samples tomorrow morning. S.McShane explained that collected samples need to be dropped off in the red cooler at the rear entrance of the Town Office to be transported to Waterbury later in the day.

Moscow Rec Field – Stewardship Visit (fallen trees). This discussion item will be discussed at a later meeting.

Green Up Day Follow-Up- This discussion item will be discussed at a later meeting.

Other Business - None

The meeting adjourned shortly after 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah McShane- Planning & Zoning Director