



Town of Stowe
Conservation Commission
Monday September 9, 2024
MEETING MINUTES

A regular meeting of the Conservation Commission was held on Monday September 9, 2024, at 5:30 pm. The meeting was held remotely using zoom with no physical meeting location. Members in Attendance: Jacquie Mauer, Phillip Branton, Colleen McGovern, Kay Barrett. Staff in Attendance: Sarah McShane. Others in Attendance: Michael Snyder.

Call to Order- Following technical difficulties, J.Mauer called the meeting to order around 5:38 PM.

Public Comments & Adjustments to the Agenda – No public comments. No adjustments to the agenda.

Review Meeting Minutes [08/27/2024] On a motion by P.Branton, seconded by C.McGovern, the minutes of the prior meeting passed without opposition.

Develop Monthly Calendar for Educational Activities & Topics. Members continued their discussion regarding building a library of educational materials that could be used throughout the year to educate the public on a variety of natural resources and conservation topics. J.Mauer shared her recent experience and conversations from SLT's annual meeting. Members felt the Commission could do more regarding education by tabling at events, sharing information on front porch forum, hosting public meetings, and other similar avenues. Members discussed the update to the Town Plan and how the Commission could learn through its own public education efforts, while informing the community. Members discussed effective ways to carry out public education efforts (i.e., tabling at the Farmers Market, hosting public talks, meeting people where they are at, etc.) Next steps include J.Mauer posting seasonal fall information regarding 'leave the leaves' and K.Barrett continuing to discuss and develop a possible public talk regarding flood resiliency.

Sterling Forest Management Plan – Continued Discussion & Development of Recommended Amendments. S.McShane introduced M.Snyder and mentioned how he can be a resource to the Commission. During the last meeting there was some confusion regarding the difference between a land management plan and a forest management plan and the level of specificity that should be included in the land management plan recommendations. Members shared their outstanding questions/comments. P.Branton mentioned winter parking, parking and trail signage, and trail management/maintenance as the primary issues he feels need to be addressed in the plan amendments. Members also discussed a possible phase 4 timber harvest. M.Snyder shared his comments on land management plans and forest management plans. He described the Sterling Forest Management Plan as an 'activity plan' that covers many topics (trails, parking, timber management, etc.) and should contain strong statements of land ethics. The plan should contain minimum details such as who is responsible for completing/coordinating the activity, when should it be completed, and to what standards should be applied. He encouraged the Commission to stick to guiding principles or the 'philosophy' for the forest. This will allow for adaptability and not prescribe an exact procedure. Members discussed trail-based recreation- a human use that needs to be met but can damage the forest- how can the use be accommodated while minimizing impacts. Members discussed changes in hydrology and investing in fixing or relocating portions of the Upper Gorge Loop to be more sustainable. Members discussed forestry and how a larger forestry project might also need annual maintenance. Members discussed how remediating the Upper Gorge Loop might also be able to be paired with a forest management project to

provide dual benefits- trail maintenance, economics, and forest diversity. Members discussed ways to articulate recommendations while recognizing some activities are not simple. Members felt they should review the proposed plan recommendations to make sure they accurately reflect the intentions of each activity and contain strong statements of purpose and intent to provide direction for the future management of the forest. Members also discussed forest health, timber management, trail hydrology, etc. M.Snyder explained how by disrupting the forest canopy, it accelerates the development of the forest and although the patch cuts may appear 'simple' following the harvest, at a project level the forest is more 'complex' and more resilient. Members discussed how the proposed plan amendments are intended to provide factual updates but also modernize the plan to contain a strong forest 'philosophy', purpose, and intentions. Staff will re-circulate the draft plan with the hopes of finalizing the amendments and advancing recommendations during the next meeting.

Discuss- Solicit Student Representative for Upcoming School Year. Members discussed opportunities to work with the school and find another student representative for the upcoming school year. J.Mauer shared that the Energy Committee recently found two great student representatives. J.Mauer and E.Freund plan on meeting with Roger Murphy from Stowe High School to discuss.

General Reports & Updates

Members thanked C.McGovern for her contributions to the Commission as it was her last meeting before moving abroad for school.

Other Business

None

Next Meeting Date- 9/23/2024. The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah McShane- Planning & Zoning Director