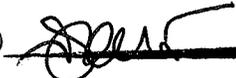


Huntington Conservation Commission (HCC) Meeting
 June 11, 2009
 Minutes approved July 9, 2009

Meeting began 7:05pm, meeting adjourned pm

In attendance: Amy Dohner, Alan Brace, Steve Hagenbuch, Laura Hill Bermingham, Wally Jenkins Margaret Fowle, Roman Livak

Absent: Tyler Miller

RECEIVED 
 DATE July 16, 2009

I. Minutes and mail

- Changes made to June minutes
- June minutes unanimously approved
- Mail disseminated

II. Public Comment:

- No public attended meeting

III. Selection of HCC Chairperson/ Treasurer:

- Amy Dohner is the Treasurer for the duration of her term (through February or March 2010 – Steve will check on the exact month)
- Steve will remain as chair through the July 2009 HCC meeting
- Steve is concerned about the unknown time commitment – attending different meeting, representing HCC at functions, etc.

Month	HCC representative- Agenda-maker, meeting facilitator*
July	Margaret
August	Amy
September	Roman
October	Wally
November	Steve
December	Alan
January	Tyler

*Agenda-maker, meeting facilitator needs to post agenda at library, stores, and town office

IV. HHCT Application to the Conservation Fund Discussion and Process

- Amy Seidl was not able to attend this meeting
- Margaret will contact Amy about attending July's meeting
- In 2007, the HCC had a recommended maximum amount for the Conservation Fund, but these guidelines were not publicized
- December 2007 meeting minutes noted that grants awarded from the conservation fund are recommended to be limited to 25% of the total amount needed, not to exceed 50%
- The HHCT did not know about this guideline, because this statement never reached the Selectboard
- Alan recommends keeping it as a "recommended" amount is preferable so the HCC can be flexible with proposals
- Roman would like to see it implemented in the Criteria for Use of Huntington's Conservation Fund

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- Tyler recommends that the HCC discuss this again before it is implemented

- Tyler thinks that 25% seems too low, and it would be difficult for groups or individuals to find an additional 75% for funding especially for agricultural and forest lands
- Margaret recommends stating “no more than 50%” and make clear that matching funds are necessary
- Amy and Steve agree that a recommended percentage is needed for clarity
- The intent of the conservation fund is to not to fund entire project
- The “General Criteria of the Conservation Fund #1c” already mentions that the proposal must leverage additional funds, and will be left “as is”

Preparation of questions for Amy Seidl:

Who will hold the conservation easement?

- HHCT cannot hold the conservation easement
- The town may be able to hold the easement
- Vermont Land Trust can hold the easement but would not be likely to fund it

Would be revenues from taxes?

- Tyler answered that development rights are extinguished and there is no revenue
- Tyler’s explanation of conservation easements:
 - conservation easement = perpetual restriction of development rights and the only way they return is through eminent domain
 - A land trust can sell a piece of property and sell development rights
 - If the land trust owns a property outright, they can sell it and use the money for another conservation project, but the land trust cannot have an auction for the development rights

Thinking about the future... will there be a small plot on the property set aside from the easement for a homestead so a family can live on the land?

- MOU talks about building structures not more than 1/3 of the existing barn, which is a sale agreement stipulation
- The Keirs’ were clear that there be no development on the land

Are funds going to a project that is in danger of currently being developed? Why are the Keirs’ selling it?

Current use – leased to a local farmer for hay production. In this, does the farmer lose this opportunity? Are they aware of the project proposal?

- Revenue from ¼ acre community garden is \$25/plot
- Leasing an acre for ~\$150 to an intensive grower may provide the most revenue for taxes, etc.

When will the HCC will make a decision and what can the HHCT expect?

- Alan recommends an August 2009 vote to recommend to the selectboard and what amount
- Other HCC members concur
- Then the proposal will go onto the Selectboard

- There is ~\$154,000 currently in the conservation fund

V. *E. coli* Huntington river project

- Aaron Worthley did not come to the meeting
- Steve reported that there is no new news for the *E. coli* Huntington river project because it is unknown whether the lab will have funding for this project
- A reminder that Friday, June 12 evening presentation and Saturday, June 13 trip with Sue Morse (wildlife tracker) will lead a trip about scat along the river
- Folks do not need to attend both sessions, just 1

VI. Briefings:

1. Large Habitat Block Assessment – Steve Hagenbuch

- Richmond Conservation Commission proposal in which Jericho, Hinesburg, and Richmond are currently working with a consulting ecologist (Jesse Mohr) and state employee Jens Hilke to map large functional habitat blocks that wildlife are using and the corridors that link them
- Results of the study will have a better idea of how wildlife are using town land for guiding zoning regulations, conservation fund applications, etc.
- Results will be GIS database and maps of priority blocks and connective corridors, presentations to local conservation organizations in the town
- Cost for Huntington = \$2400
- Steve thought the only funding available would be through the Conservation Fund
- The HCC would submit an application to the Selectboard for the \$2400, and the Selectboard would decide whether to fund the project
- The project needs to be funded soon
- Amy noted that knowledge about large habitat blocks, especially land shared between 2 towns (e.g., Richmond and Huntington), may provide clarity for future conservation projects
- Amy noted that the HCC has \$1369.17 remaining in the budget that needs to be spent by June 30, 2009 (funds do not carry over)
- The HCC can commit these funds and go to the Conservation Fund
- Municipal planning grants may be another source of funds
- Steve should contact Jesse and Jens about whether the process of requesting conservation funds will take too long
- Tyler is skeptical of the proposal and what we will get out of the project
- Public data is available for large habitat block assessment
- The fieldwork component is modest (40 hours)
Proposal does not include prep work, getting landowner permission, etc.
- The winter fieldwork component won't target all species
- Amy thinks this work is important especially for planning
- There is data that has not been field checked, so the value is in the field verification (10 hours total, though, which doesn't seem to be enough)

- Q for Jens Hilke and Jesse Mohr: Beyond what data already exist on large habitat blocks, what else are we getting from this with minimal field time? Can we do this next year when funding is available and time is not so short?
- Steve will contact Jesse and Jens via email and pass on information to HCC members

2. Energy Homes Tour – Amy

- Amy has been working with Dean Menke with finding individuals with alternative energy homes
- Solar, wind, geothermal, microhydro, and highly efficient homes
- Wind, geothermal and microhydro are in short supply
- HCC members threw out some names of people for Amy and Dean to contact
- Advertising should begin at the end of June

VII. HCC Size

- The Selectboard approved up to 9 HCC members
- The Selectboard recommended that voting members do not record minutes because of the inherent distraction involved with minute-taking
- The HCC takes the Selectboard's recommendation, but HCC members do not agree, as, traditionally, HCC voting members have always recorded meeting minutes
- Advertising for new members would be a way to increase visibility of the HCC
- If many people showed interest, the HCC would have to devise a method of selecting 2 new voting members
- The discussion was tabled

VIII. State of the Forest Report:

- Roman made a motion to approve the State of the Forest report
- Steve seconded
- Unanimous approval by HCC members
- Steve made a motion to approve that the HCC budget will be used to color copy and bind 100 copies of the State of the Forest report (or up to \$500)
- Amy seconded
- Unanimous approval by HCC members
- Aaron Worthley will create the final pdf with town forest maps
- Amy will get the final report from Aaron and take care of copying/binding

IX. Vote on the 2009-2010 Budget Spending

- Tyler spoke with the VYCC about the cost of a scaled-down version of a trail design through the Town Forest
- The trail design would incorporate erosion control, scenic routes, etc. through the Town Forest parcel
- The lowest amount needed is \$500
- Roman made a motion to spend up to \$800 of the HCC budget for VYCC to design a trail for the Town Forest
- Alan seconded
- Unanimous approval by HCC members

- Amy will check with Ed about billing and start date information for the trail design to be covered under the 2008-2009 fiscal year budget
- Amy will then get in touch with Tyler with the details

X. Special Places

- The HCC has not yet held a summer 2009 Special Places trip
- Tentative date = September 2009
- Be prepared to discuss places and themes during the July 2009 meeting

Items for July's agenda:

- Amy Seidl presentation of HHCT Conservation Fund proposal application
- Further discussion of Large Habitat Block Assessment – possible guest Jens Hilke?
- April's retreat discussion: Teams?
- Special places tour – places and themes