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July 13, 2010

**Huntington Conservation Commission (HCC)  
May 13, 2010**

**Meeting began 7:04pm, adjourned 9:09pm**

**In attendance:** Wally Jenkins (chair), Roman Livak, Margaret Fowle, Alan Brace, Laura Hill Bermingham

**Wally called the meeting to order at 7:04pm**

**Review and approve minutes, review mail:**

- Wally moved to approved March meeting minutes, Roman seconded the motion
- Unanimous approval

**Dave Brautigam**

- Dave is interested in developing a new Camel's Hump Skiers Association (CHSA) trail in the Town Forest
- The trail would run parallel to the ridgeline, connecting to logging roads and Mark Smith's property
- Dave is also working with fellow landowners adjacent to the Town Forest to work on the access issue
- Dave has contacted Alan Brace, Cara LaBounty, and Brett Lindemuth, and potentially other landowners
- Alan asked if we need to talk to the Selectboard first before initiating a conversation regarding access with the landowners
- Wally spoke to Selectboard member Wayne Curley who "passed the buck back to us" regarding pursuing Town Forest access
- Wally thinks that the Selectboard would be more than happy for the HCC to help gain access to the Town Forest
- Dave mentioned that he would be interested in parking
- How would the Town Forest be used? Ski, bike, ATV, etc?
- Dave would like to attend the June HCC meeting

**Update on meeting with Selectboard and Mike Snyder**

- Mike Snyder, Chittenden County Forester, gave a summary of his thoughts on Town Forest designation at the May 3, 2010 Selectboard meeting
- Mike mentioned that there used to be benefits with designation, but now it has changed
- Margaret mentioned that Mike put the Selectboard members on the same page with the need for access to the Town Forest
- The information Mike presented was based on Mike's experience with the range of other town forests
- Mike mentioned that there is a proposed state funding cut, so that county foresters may not be able to work for free particularly with Town Forests
- One thing Mike did not discuss was the distinction between the town designating the Town Forest versus sending a letter to the Forest and Parks soliciting the state for

designation.

- The HCC will follow up with the Selectboard about whether to designate the town forest through the town or the state
- Mike also mentioned that he can be used as a resource for access issues
- Margaret has a contact in the Fellowship of the Wheel (mountain bike organization) and they are looking for access for mountain bikes through Honey Hollow and Huntington through the State Forest
- The Hinesburg Town Forest has issues with mountain bikers, especially noted as parking issues, waste, noise
- Fellowship of the Wheel is sensitive to these Hinesburg Town Forest issues

#### **Bird monitoring at the Town Forest**

- Aaron Worthley, Margaret, Laura and Roman are interested in monitoring
- Wally made a motion for the HCC and volunteers will continue monitoring but will be sensitive to landowners, Roman seconded; unanimous approval
- Margaret will ask Brett where we should park

#### **New applicants**

- Roman moved to recommend Sally Hillary as a member of the HCC; Wally seconded the motion; unanimous approval
- Laura moved to recommend Cassandra Wilday as a member of the HCC; Roman seconded; unanimous approval
- Wally will contact the applicants and the Selectboard to get on the agenda before the June HCC meeting

#### **Conservation fund “can we initiation” proposal**

- At the May 3, 2010 Selectboard meeting, Wally asked whether the HCC could solicit proposal for the Conservation Fund
- The Selectboard agreed that the HCC can solicit proposals, but if there are 2 competing proposals, and 1 is an HCC proposal, we must send both to the Selectboard
- Wally also drafted a Conservation Fund Process document outlining the process involved in submitted a proposal to use Conservation Funds
- Wally added the following statements (#3 and 6) to the process document:
  - 3) Proposals may be initiated by but not limited to the following; Huntington residents, appointed and elected town officials, and local, regional, and national conservation organizations.
  - 6) There are no monetary caps on requests for Conservation Funds. The amount requested should reflect the significance of the project while taking into account competing current and future possibilities for the use of this Fund.
- #6 was discussed... there is no cap on funding, because it would be difficult to figure out a specific dollar amount or percentage. If it is too low, it could be restrictive on what kind of projects would pursue funding.

- Alan and Laura were concerned about the lack of a statement about matching funds in the process statement
- Matching fund information is contained with the proposal under Financial Information, 1c. “leverages additional funds,” but there is no mention in the process document
- It was suggested to add the following statement to #6: “There are no monetary caps on requests for Conservation Funds, *and matching funds are recommended.*”
- Roman made a motion to accept the process document as modified; Margaret seconded; unanimous approval
- Laura will contact Heidi about putting the Conservation Fund criteria on the Town website under “documents” and put copies in the Town Office and bulletin board

### **Special Places Tour**

- Wally’s preference for a summer Special Places is Burnt Rock, but Margaret is concerned about bushwhacking through thick brush with a lot of people
- Perhaps this would be a good place for a Fall (fall color) or Spring (spring ephemerals /amphibians ) or even Winter tracking Special Places?
- It was decided that a Huntington River walk on August 28<sup>th</sup> would be the next Special Places
- Wally can co-lead the event, with possibly Nirmegh?
- Margaret will contact the Audubon Center for permission to park and access the river

### **Photo Contest**

- Wally recommends a winter photo contest at the library with the theme “scenic beauty and biodiversity” of Huntington
- Ideas include
  - 1) a juried exhibit (Wally has a list of potential jurors) with categories (young adult, best in show, honorable mention, etc.)
  - 2) attendants vote – “viewer’s choice”
- Wally talked to the library board, and there may be heating issues at the library for a winter activity

### **Scenic Inventory**

- Wally would like to survey 10-15 spots as part of the scenic inventory this summer
- Roman suggested taking pictures of the sites, and posting them on the HCC website with the “score” so the protocol is transparent to townspeople
- Laura and Alan liked Roman’s idea and it was suggested that the Brace Farm could be used as 1 site and find a few other willing landowners
- Wally recommended adding a statement to the website that the inventory is strictly to gather baseline data for potential Conservation Fund proposals
- The random site generation of Aaron’s needs to be “weeded out” for good and bad sites to pursue the inventory – Wally will pursue this and contact Aaron
- Wally will write up a small article for the May Times Ink and pick 10-12 good sites to inventory
- After new members Cassandra and Sally get on board we will go out and try the

inventory at the selected sites

### **Salt runoff bioremediation project**

- Heather Pembroke previously measured salinity levels in the Huntington River, and they were high near the salt/sand pile in Town Center
- Laura and her husband Dan Bermingham would like to develop a proposal to bring to the Selectboard to help target point-source salt runoff from the sand/salt pile into the Huntington River
- Laura explained that certain plants have the ability to take up excess salt from the soil, therefore stopping runoff into the river if the plants were strategically placed
- Laura and Dan did some research on plants that can phytoremediate the soils and cited a research study that demonstrated that adding beneficial soil bacteria at the time of planting increases plant germination and growth and the ability to bioremediate
- Commissioners were interested in the proposal and would like to see a list of plants
- Laura will develop a proposal, including a list of plants, and expenses
- Wally recommended talking with Nate Sands, Huntington tree warden, about potential sources of funding

### **Salamander Conservation Update**

- Wally spoke with Everett Marshall who spoke with Steve Parren (Natural Heritage Program) about the land for sale in Buel's Gore at one of the salamander crossing sites
- Wally received a return call from a woman with the Trust for Public Land who wanted to receive details on the land for sale
- She will contact a state-level person with the Fish and Wildlife Department who works with land deals
- Wally hasn't moved on writing a letter to the current landowner, but it was agreed a letter can do no harm, only good, so Wally will draft a letter and send it around to the commission

### **Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions (AVCC) Annual Meeting**

- Wally attended the AVCC Annual Meeting in April and he thought it was very interesting
- There are lots of resources for conservation commissions, but they need definitive town plans so they can assist monetarily
- One source of funding Wally mentioned was the Vermont Housing Community Trust (Smart Growth) for affordable housing and conservation

### **Other business**

None

### **Adjourn:**

Roman moved to adjourn at 9:09pm, Wally seconded, unanimous approval

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**Date unapproved minutes to town clerk:** May 18, 2010

**Date approved minutes to the town clerk:** July 13, 2010