

Huntington Conservation Commission (HCC) Meeting Minutes

September 10, 2009

Approved October 8, 2009

Meeting began 7:00pm, meeting adjourned 9:07pm

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

Public in attendance: Aaron Worthley

Guests: Justin Kenney (VYCC), Everett Marshall (Huntington Planning Commission)

I. Minutes and mail

- Mail disseminated
- Minutes from July 2009 approved
- August meeting was presented as “notes,” but there were only 3 commissioners present during this meeting, so there was no approval

II. Public Comment

- No public comment

III. Town Forest

1. *VYCC Trail design, Justin Kenney from Vermont Youth Conservation Corp (VYCC)*

Tyler gave some background information on the process to date

- The process for town forest trail planning was started by the HCC last winter
- A grant was written, but the proposal was not funded
- Now, the HCC members will be more involved in the trail planning, working with the VYCC
- Justin had been given the State of the Forest Report and is knowledgeable of our goals for the Town Forest

Justin’s presentation

- The VYCC is enthusiastic about being brought into the trail implementation at the beginning of the process
- He is interested in hearing about the commissioner’s individual goals and would like to walk the land with interested HCC members
- The next phase will be to look at maps and start trail design, look at existing logging roads, where do we want the trail to go, etc. (creating a “rough plan”)
- 3rd phase – start flagging trail, create a trail plan to submit with grant proposal (due January 2010)
- Justin served on the grant funding panel and can help us out with the proposal
 - 20% match required – VYCC crew will provide match with labor match
 - eg., ask for \$5800/week, VYCC contributes the match
 - Funding comes from successful VYCC grants
- Justin asked about access: We are currently working on an ancient road/class 4 road for access, which is looking promising
- Justin will send commissioners a survey with basic questions
- October 17, 2009 – walk with HCC commissioners and Justin with VYCC; 9am meeting at beginning of Stagecoach Rd.

- Tyler will send Justin directions
- Aaron asked whether there is there a standard deliverable with the VYCC trail design
- Justin replied that the VYCC will prepare a physical document, similar to the State of the Forest report, including proposed maps and actual designs (bridges, etc.)

2. Designation

Steve spoke with Mike Snyder about Town Forest (TF) designation

- There was concern from the HCC about whether official TF designation will negate the possibility of selling the property
- If the intent remained the same, to the best of Mike's knowledge, this will not affect future sale
- In the spirit of the TF program, Mike encourages a TF designation
- Alan: What is the legal wording? Is it possible to find the statement?
- Steve thinks that Mike would know the wording, but will check with him again
- Aaron's understanding is that there was once a more formal procedure, but now it is just a "ceremonial" procedure
- Roman: How strict is the designation? Are there any liabilities?
- Tyler: If we're giving up any rights, we'd probably have to sign a legal document. If there is a hidden drawback, then it should be upfront.
- Amy: Is there someone other than Mike that we can talk to about the legal document?
- Justin noted that Mike Frayiser, with Forest Parks and Recreation, is a good contact for town forest designation legal questions
- Steve proposed a vote to make a recommendation to the Selectboard or not to present a TF package (designation, management plan, State of the Forest report)
- Mike will try to be at the Selectboard meeting in Oct/Nov when the TF designation is discussed
- Steve will go back to Mike to request something more official, and if there is nothing, than we have to make a decision based on the information at hand

3. Access

- Aaron mentioned that he is confident that the TF access will go through based on the positive responses from the affected landowners

IV. Invoice and Budget

1. Water Monitoring Equipment

- Water monitoring equipment totaled \$32.25, which is available in HCC budget
- Roman made a motion to approve the \$32.25 for the water monitoring equipment
- Alan seconded
- Unanimous approval

2. 2010 Budget

- The selectboard will request the HCC's budget shortly
- Roman wanted to raise the issue now, prior to the selectboard's request
- Amy can review how the HCC has used the budget and present this information at the October HCC meeting

- Amy will ask Ed Wildman about the monthly budget statement and report back
- At the end of July 2009, \$53 had been spent from the HCC budget
- Money for educational materials may be needed in the future

V. Inventories

1. Municipal Planning Grant, Everett Marshall

The Huntington Planning Commission is interested in having the Selectboard and HCC's backing for applying for a municipal planning grant for a natural resource inventory of the town of Huntington. The grant is due September 30, 2009. The following Vermont towns have gotten municipal planning grants: Mt. Holly, Warren, Waitsfield, and Fayston.

What is it? A Natural Resource Inventory of upland forest, better wetland delineation, vernal pool mapping, critical wildlife habitat mapping, mapping of wildlife corridors, rare species mapping. In addition to the consulting firm who is doing the project, Everett mentioned wanting to involve the HCC, the landowners, and the community as a whole.

Benefits:

- A lot of work has been done on state lands, whereas this inventory would focus on private land on a volunteer basis.
- Overall, this program will provide more information for land owners, especially those under the current use program, about managing their land and avoiding special areas that can be taken out of timber production, critical wildlife habitat, etc.
- Interested large property owners will be targeted
- Forest mapping ties in with Town Forest and forests in other communities
- This effort may bring in conservation dollars, options for land owner to conserve the land, will give the town options to conserve land
- Timber production – harvest resources with best management information and best decisions
- Save money for landowners – make things more predictable for natural resource reviews for regulations involving land planning and development

Timeframe:

- Proposal due September 30, 2009
- Grants awarded in November 2009
- May 2011 to produce a product
- Single town grant = \$10,000
- May have to put out for bid
- This grant fits in with Large Block Habitat Assessment proposal, and Steve will invite Jesse Mohr to present his information about this project
- Steve would like to address a support letter to the Selectboard giving support to the municipal planning grant
- Roman would like the HCC to take ownership or co-sponsor with the Planning Commission

- Everett supports HCC ownership because he thinks the HCC should be more involved in this process than the Planning Commission
- Amy noted the various administrative responsibilities that the HCC would be taking on: Securing landowner permission, writing RFP, interviewing, hiring, etc.
- It would be helpful to build relationships with landowners, and good for the HCC public relations
- There may or may not be interest in the Planning Commission other than Everett
- Margaret, Wally, Roman, Laura, and Everett are all interested in possibly working on a subcommittee to see this through, if the grant is awarded
- Steve made a motion to have the HCC co-sponsor this project, including writing a letter of support to the Selectboard and co-sponsoring the grant (i.e., assisting in writing the proposal and assisting in administration of the grant)
- Roman seconded
- Unanimous approval
- Steve will write the letter to the Selectboard, which is needed by Monday, September 14
- Roman, Laura and Everett will meet next Thurs, Sept 14 at 7pm

2. Organization and Maintenance

- Alan got 2 filing cabinet drawers in the town office and 2 poster tubes for maps
- When we are ready to move the documents from the box to drawers, Ed will
- Tyler's phone 434-4163 – would like help going through the box from Aaron

3. Scenic Inventory

- Do we want to conduct a scenic inventory?
- As a group, the HCC commissioners were planning on picking a spot and comparing multiple inventories while working in pairs
- The mapping of the sites had begun, about 2 years ago, and had been put on the backburner while waiting for more commissioners to join
- Aaron may still have these 10-20 scenic places that had been designated for testing
- Wally will call Aaron about the places
- Amy proposed a training session prior to going out
- Wally suggested that we look at rec field to run through the scenic inventory methodology during October's meeting, but it will be dark by meeting time
- Tyler recommended reading the document, running it on our own property, and bring questions to the October meeting
- Tyler will look for the electronic copy of the document

VI. Updates and Plans

1. Website

- Laura spoke with Dan Stoddard about the HCC website
- Currently the HCC website is under Tania O'Neal's personal GMAVT account, and the HCC would like to move this from the personal site to the town site

- The town is currently interested in a redesign of the website and is interested in pursuing the new HCC website
- Laura will contact Will Keyworth and check back in with Dan Stoddard

2. Times Inks articles

- The article was presented to commissioners and there was opposition to some of the language in the article
- Amy expressed interested in crafting a “mission statement” of the HCC
- Our reputation to the public is important – this is what the HCC does, we want the public’s help, etc.
- Tyler: Let’s come up with a general conceptual idea then go into some of the things we’ve done
- Take a look at annual reports and lump into categories (educational programs: 101 series, special events: Special places, inventories, review applications for conservation funds)
- Amy would like to call Aaron about whether a statement, historically, has already been drafted
- Heidi Racht mentioned that the HCC could have a quarterly “Conservation Corner” in the Times Ink
- Wally mentioned that previously, the HCC would submit a special report after an event and it may be hard to come up with enough material to fill a quarterly “Conservation Corner”
- Steve recommended that the Richmond CC write for the “Conservation Corner” 2 times a year, Huntington CC – 2 times a year
- Steve will contact the Richmond CC

3. Alternative energy homes tour

- Successful!
- 2 groups of 9 (18 people) visited multiple homes in the area
- Amy will check in with Dean Menke about pictures and a Times Ink write-up

4. Gillette's Pond Special Places Tour

- Scheduled for October 3, 2009 at 9am-12pm, meet at the dam end
- In partnership with Richmond CC
- Wally Jenkins (Huntington) and Bob Lowe (Richmond) leading the trip
- Focusing on natural and cultural history of the pond
- Steve drafted an announcement in the Times Ink and will post on Front Porch Forum and post flyers in Huntington and Richmond
- Registration through Steve
- Limit to 15 people
- Bring your own boats, pfd’s

5. Conservation Fund – potential opportunities

- Wally has not had a chance to speak with the landowner about potential conservation land

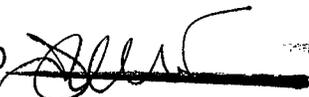
- By Sept 25, the HCC will know whether the HHCT will present the HCC Conservation Fund grant
- Amy was interested in the Sherman Hollow Conservation Initiative – Steve said there is nothing new and Tyler mentioned that there is an attempt to get forest legacy dollars for the initiative

6. Other Business

- Amy has the State of the Forest report printed
- Amy will put the printed reports at the library and town office
- **VT Association of Conservation Commissions**
 - Huntington is not a current member – does the HCC want to become a member?
 - Commissioners agreed yes
 - Amy had made the attempt and sent emails about becoming a member and never heard back
 - Steve will send Amy the email from the VT Association of Conservation Commissions and Amy will contact them again
- Steve is moving to Waterbury Center, and the October meeting will be Steve's last meeting, but he would like to see the Town Forest through
- Tyler is also moving to Burlington and the October meeting will also be Tyler's last meeting
- **Thank you** Steve and Tyler for your service and dedication!

Agenda for October meeting

- HCC budget review
- Scenic inventory
- Large Habitat Inventory assessment – forested block and corridor focus, Jesse Mohr potential guest speaker
- HCC's statement of purpose, i.e., condensing our various activities into a succinct categories in a statement (use previous Annual Reports as a starting place)
- New commissioners
- New chair
- Website update

RECEIVED 
October 14, 2009