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July 23, 2015

Huntington Conservation Commission ~~DRAFT~~ Minutes
Thursday, May 14th 2015

7:00 pm – 9:00 pm Town Office Lower Level

Commission Members in Attendance: Jenna Whitson, Sheri Lynn, Roman Livak, & Rebecca Ryan

Commission Members Absent: Darlene Palola, JB Bryan

7:06 Review and approve minutes from last meeting.

- Roman motioned to approve the March minutes as they will be amended by him. Seconded by Jenna. Motion passes unanimously.
- Roman motioned to approve the April minutes as amended. Seconded by Sheri. Motion passed unanimously.
- Reminder: Note taker of the meeting sends draft and then final minutes to Barbara Elliott and Heidi Racht.

Public Comment: No public comment tonight

Town Forest

Overview and discussion:

- Members welcomed Dave Brautigam, President of the Camel's Hump Nordic Ski Association (CHNSA) and one of the land owners to allow the ski association to access trails for skiing.
- Sheri gave a quick overview of HCC's attempt to purchase new property in the village for a future town forest. Since that failed, HCC is interesting in pursuing access to the old town forest. The town forest is only accessible through private property.
- Dave said CHNSA has been operating for 35 years on privately-owned property. CHNSA board works with land owners annually for permission to ski on the property (annual land use agreement). Owners can opt out at any time. This process has worked well over the years.
- Dave's thought was that with permission from Nils Smith, hikers could park in the CHNSA lot on Nils' property on Bert White Road, and hike over the Stagecoach Road to the town forest (we estimated this would be about 1.5 – 2 miles). He offered to speak to the landowners along the road.
- We talked about the possibility of creating a place to park closer to the town forest. While landowners have improved Stage Coach Rd, there may be some resistance to regular motorized traffic but may be a consideration for special activities/events.
- We talked about whether state and/or federal law exists regarding handicap accessibility to public land. We need to research.
- If landowners granted permission for future more accessible parking, Dave questioned whether the town (through the conservation fund) could help to pay for additional road improvement.

o **Next steps:**

1. Dave will talk to landowners along Stagecoach Road about allowing hiking to town forest and potential for future limited vehicular access.
2. Dave will contact Rick Fritz about potential parking.
3. Roman will talk to Jeff Chapman about potential parking.
4. Rebecca will talk to Nils about potential parking.
5. We'll continue the discussion at the June 11 HCC meeting. Rebecca will confirm with Dave.

Catamount Trail Association Easement Requests

In preparation for the June 1 Selectboard meeting, all agreed that our request to the Selectboard is the motion we approved at the April meeting: [The HCC believes as] recommended in the 2009 State of the Forest Report that the Selectboard pursue an easement on the existing trails [in the town forest] and pursue the process needed to finalize the agreement [between the town and Catamount Trail Association].

HCC members who can attend the meeting should attend.

○ Next steps:

1. Rebecca will ask Amy Kelsey with CTA to email the following (and be prepared to speak and answer questions):

- Actual description of the trails/standard width
- Sample easement
- Trail map (proposed)

2. Rebecca will confirm with Barbara Elliott the date she needs the materials prior to the meeting. She will also send Barbara the April minutes.

Work plan and priorities

Huntington Planning Commission public meeting (May 5)

- No one had an update other than Darlene submitted comments of her own.

Statehouse activities:

- Jenna said the state is celebrating 100 years of town forests and there are activities across the state. We may be able to gather ideas for future activities. More information is available at vtcommunityforestry.org.
- Rebecca was unable to attend the forest fragmentation press conference as she had hoped.

Wild Parsnip Insert:

- The insert will be included in the next Times Ink. We can help with preparation. Rebecca will confirm with Heidi Racht that the paper will be stuffed and sorted on Thursday, May 21 at the library and the time.
- We talked briefly about another invasive, Japanese Knotweed, but decided we can only do so much and need to focus on our work plan priorities.

Amphibian Crossing Update:

- Jenna went out the one night Cindy recommended, but we have had no updates since.
- Sheri will check with Cindy.

Membership Recruitment/Co-Chair/Minutes taker:

- Jenna posted a nice invite for new members on the Front Porch Forum but received no responses.
- Sheri suggested instead of continuing to try to find a note taker to attend each meeting, that we invest in a digital recorder with a good microphone and hire someone to transcribe highlights from home at his/her convenience.

Special Places Tour:

- The group decided, given the earlier discussion about the town forest, that this summer's program should be there, and would give us the opportunity to think about it as a destination for community members. A Saturday (or possibly Sunday) in July may be best.

Next steps:

1. Sheri will check with Cindy about crossing news.
 2. Sheri will check on prices of recorders before we decide to purchase.
 3. Rebecca will ask Cindy Sprague, Wally Jenkins and Joe Perella if they are interested and available as guides for special tour.
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Other business/Updates:

- Per Barbara Elliott's request, HCC reviewed the budget. We have underspent this year (current balance is \$5615.36). At the next meeting we will discuss what we may need to purchase before the end of the fiscal year (June 30).
- Roman mounted the large ECOS maps which we quickly reviewed. They are a great resource but we need to determine where to display and how to use. We thought we had four maps, but the Roman could not find the connectivity map. Rebecca will ask Margaret about it.

9:00 **Adjourn**

Draft minutes submitted by Rebecca Ryan on 5/17/15, revised 5/25/15

Approved: June 11, 2015