

Town of Huntington — Selectboard Meeting

Monday, September 17, 2012—6:30 pm

Huntington Community Church Annex

APPROVED MINUTES

RECEIVED 
DATE September 16, 2012

<p>Agenda</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Input on Expenditure of Conservation Funds – Application from Maple Wind Farm • Public Comment • Planning Commission Grant Application – Dana Cummings / Everett Marshall • Determination for Expenditure of Conservation Funds • Minutes / Warrants • Town Administrator & Highway Department – Barbara Elliott • Town Office / Town Hall Repairs – Roman Livak • Planning: Agenda for 09/24 Legislative Meeting – Doug Graver
<p>Selectboard members present</p>	<p>Jim Christiansen (Chair), Dori Barton (Vice-Chair), Doug Graver, Everett Lewis, Roman Livak</p>
<p>Staff present</p>	<p>Elliott (Town Administrator), Heidi Racht (Town Clerk)</p>
<p>Others present</p>	<p>Julia Austin, Ruth Blodgett (Times Inkl), Dana Cummings, Jennifer Esser, Sylvia Ewerts, Margaret Fowle, Pam Hart, Bob Heiser (Project Manager, Vermont Land Trust), Bruce Hennessey, Lucinda Hill, Wally Jenkins, Caitlin Jenness, Duncan Keir, Jon Kart, Brett Lindemuth, Mark Lubkowitz, Everett Marshall, Joe Perella, Jim Sadler, Cindy Sprague, Beth Whiting, Aaron Worthley</p>
<p>Call to order</p>	<p>Christiansen called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm.</p>
<p>Public Input on Expenditure of Conservation Funds – Application from Maple Wind Farm</p>	<p><u>Project Overview / Background:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bob Heiser from Vermont Land Trust (VLT) gave an overview of the project to purchase the development rights to permanently protect the 136-acre farm at the top of Carse Road. Funding for the proposed project would come from a charitable contribution from Bruce Hennessey & Beth Whiting, the Huntington Conservation Fund, the VLT and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB). The proposal is for a permanent conservation easement co-held by VLT and the VHCB. A \$35,000 commitment from the Huntington Conservation Fund is being sought in conjunction with the \$25,000 already committed by VLT and the \$185,000 donation committed by the farm’s owners. These funds would be used to leverage \$237,500 from VHCB. Total project cost is \$482,500. • Bruce Hennessey said he and Beth initially purchased the farm based on rumors that a developer was looking at subdividing the farm and they wanted to protect it as a working farm. They’ve been farming there for the past 14 years. They allow neighbors to use their property for recreation. Hennessey noted that grass farming is a growing methodology – and the farm is ideal for this use. • Cindy Sprague, Co-Chair of the Huntington Conservation Commission (HCC) outlined the HCCs support for the project, the review of the project compared to the Conservation Fund criteria, and the HCCs recommendation that the project receive \$20,000 in funding. <p><u>Public Comment:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sylvia Ewerts – supports the project. Asked if the path to Birch Glen cabin still goes through the farm (Hennessey stated that the path was moved by the Green

Mountain Club a number of years ago).

- Duncan Keir – asked about competing current and possible projects (Sprague noted that at this time, there are no other specific projects being reviewed by the HCC). Keir also asked how the requested \$35,000 amount was determined. Hennessey stated that the project proposal was put together by Heiser. VHCB is being asked for maximum support; Hennessey & Whiting asked themselves how much they were willing to contribute; and they looked at what the current balance in the Conservation Fund is today. Hennessey noted that, as it turns out, their request is the same percentage of the fund balance as was requested for the Palola/McSweeney project. Keir stated this is a prime project that is tailored for the purpose of the Conservation Fund.
- Brett Lindemuth – recommended that HCC do a ‘gut check’ on projects as to whether they are critical, and if so, they should be recommended for the full requested amount. He asserted that while the VLT mission may be to conserve land, the Conservation Fund is about preserving critical resources. Lindemuth also noted that the fund is not very nimble and is not able to respond quickly to some opportunities. Based on this, when an opportunity does come our way that we can respond to, we may want to factor in determining that the application is a ‘critical project’. Lindemuth encouraged full funding, and noted that cash is cheap right now so that holding on to the money in the reserve fund doesn’t make a lot of sense.
- Mark Lubkowitz – spoke passionately about wanting to see the farm preserved as a working farm and as one of the most beautiful spots in Huntington
- Joe Perella – supports funding the full \$35,000, which he feels is a reasonable amount. Projects should, in part, be judged on how the land is cared for – and this project fits that criteria. He stated he is greatly moved by and emotional about the beauty of the views from the property. The land has significant soils and provides a buffer for the Long Trail land.
- Margaret Taft – asked if there is anything specifically written into the proposal regarding public access. Heiser stated that VLT does not require that working farms be open to the public – but that the project allows pedestrian use of the forest. Taft asked if the farm would be economically viable as a stand-alone 136 acre farm; Hennessey stated they do believe it would be and that for a number of years, before leasing additional land, they did farm just the 136 acres. Hennessey noted that you can’t harvest with machines – but that the farm is perfect for grazing.
- Caitlin Jenness – stated she is excited and intrigued by how our community can support this type of endeavor. The project is asking us to support the expansion of the business by using Conservation Funds to leverage additional funds. She encouraged full support of the \$35,000 request.
- Pam Hart – asked about the current balance in the fund. Sprague stated that there is about \$200,000 in the fund, accumulated over the past 10 years from taxpayer contributions. The HCC’s recommendation of \$20,000 is about 2-years of taxpayer contribution; the Maple Wind project request is for about 3 years worth of taxpayer contribution.
- Aaron Worthley – stated he is heartily in support of full funding for the project. He noted he was involved in developing the criteria for the fund and that this is the most appropriate project to come down the pike. As the last working hill farm in Huntington, this is a critical project. He expressed concern that if full support is not given, we may set a precedent that would encourage applicants to buffer their requests for fear that there would be an arbitrary reduction in the amount they are given. Worthley also noted that when we have a project such as

	<p>this, we should jump on it because opportunities like this don't come along very often.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cindy Sprague – stated that it is clear that people feel emotionally passionate about this project, but that the role of the HCC is to set aside any personal attachment or feelings about a given property and to objectively measure the project against the established criteria. Sprague noted that the HCC is very excited about all the passion that has been expressed – and that there are two openings on the HCC at present. She encouraged attendees to consider becoming a member of the HCC. • Jennifer Esser – stated we're fortunate to live in a town that has a Conservation Fund and that she supports full funding for the project. • Eric Palola – Selectboard member Lewis read a 2-page letter of support for full funding which was submitted to the Selectboard. • Harry Frank & Enid Wonnacott – Selectboard member Lewis read an email letter of support for full funding which was submitted to the Selectboard.
<p>Public Comment</p>	<p>Lewis shared a copy of a permit received by Kenny Russin for rip rapping along the Huntington River (near the Shaker Mountain Bridge) so that we would have it on file if questions arise. Dori Barton noted that as of September 15th, approval from the Army Corps of Engineers is also required for these types of projects. Elliott and Barton placed a call to the Russins to advise them of this requirement.</p>
<p>Planning Commission Grant Application – Dana Cummings / Everett Marshall</p> <p>MOTION – authorization for HPC/HCC to apply for ECOS &</p>	<p>Dori Barton recused herself from discussions, deliberations and voting regarding this project application since her company is a party in the grant proposal.</p> <p>Planning Commissioners Everett Marshall and Dana Cummings and Conservation Commissioner Jim Sadler spoke in support of the Selectboard granting authorization for the Huntington Planning Commission (HPC) and the Huntington Conservation Commission (HCC) to apply for grants to support this project, which is titled <i>Forests, Wildlife & Communities Science to Action Project</i>. This is a multi-town natural resources inventory project developed in conjunction with Richmond, Jericho and Bolton. It seeks funding from the ECOS grant program and the Municipal Planning Grant program. This multi-town planning effort, called the Chittenden County Uplands project, is being done in conjunction with the Vermont Natural Resources, the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission and the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department. It is believed that the data collected will be transferable beyond the town level, provides information to land owners about their land, and allows towns to plan for resources in a thoughtful, systematic way. Marshall noted that it is hard to protect things if you can't articulate why they are important. Jon Kart, former Richmond Selectboard member, has been taking a leadership role to coordinate the project for the four towns. Kart reviewed the budget, included in Selectboard handouts.</p> <p>There is no direct out-of-pocket expense for the towns, as the match requirements can be met through in-kind contributions. Marshall stated that he would personally make sure that systems are in place for tracking the hours put in on the project by members of the HCC and HPC which will totally fulfill our Town match requirement.</p> <p>Selectboard members made it abundantly clear that the expectation is that there will be no funds requested as the project unfolds and that all in-kind contributions will be solicited and/or fulfilled by members of the Planning and Conservation Commissions.</p> <p>Livak moved and Graver seconded that the Selectboard grant authorization to the Planning Commission to prepare grant applications in conjunction with Richmond,</p>

<p>Municipal Planning Grants</p>	<p>Jericho and Bolton for planning funds for natural resources inventory, technical assistance, and educational outreach grants from ECOS and the Municipal Planning Grant with the understanding that any Huntington town match amounts will be met by the Planning Commission and Conservation Commission through in-kind and volunteer contributions and that there will be no expenditures from the Planning Commission's or Conservation Commission's budgeted line items; and that prior to submission, the grant application should be reviewed by the Town Administrator and signed by the Selectboard Chair. Motion passed with four members in support (Christiansen, Graver, Lewis, Livak) and one abstention (Barton).</p>
<p>Determination for Expenditure of Conservation Funds - MOTION</p> <p>MOTION AMENDMENT – from Huntington Conservation Fund to Huntington Conservation Reserve Fund</p> <p>MOTION – Huntington Conservation Reserve Fund approval for Maple Wind Conservation Project</p>	<p>Graver moved and Lewis seconded that the Selectboard authorize a one-time, lump sum payment from the Huntington Conservation Fund in the amount of \$35,000, payable to the Vermont Land Trust, to support the purchase of development rights for the Maple Wind Farm, as outlined in the proposal titled <i>"Huntington Conservation Fund Application for Maple Wind Farm Conservation Project"</i>, dated July 18, 2012.</p> <p>Barton moved and Lewis seconded to change the wording to insert "Reserve" so that the fund title reads "Huntington Conservation Reserve Fund". Amendment passed unanimously.</p> <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graver – thrilled to be a part of this project and supports full funding of the application. • Livak – supports the diligence of the Huntington Conservation Commission in their review of and recommendations for funding of this project, and will support funding of the project. Noted that the timeframe required for the project was difficult for a volunteer board to meet. • Barton – believes the project meets the criteria and supports full funding. This is an example of how the fund did work well – and that if we only get these types of projects in the future the fund will be a huge success. This is an example of how we can do a large-scale conservation project for a small amount of money. • Christiansen –there is a fundamental flaw in how we are managing the Conservation Fund. As a Town, we should proactively look at property we want to preserve rather than wait for projects to come to us. We should look at how we can begin discussion with land owners early in the process. That said, he stated that he supports funding for the project. <p>Vote on the amended motion, which reads: that the Selectboard authorize a one-time, lump sum payment from the Huntington Conservation Reserve Fund in the amount of \$35,000, payable to the Vermont Land Trust, to support the purchase of development rights for the Maple Wind Farm, as outlined in the proposal titled <i>"Huntington Conservation Fund Application for Maple Wind Farm Conservation Project"</i>, dated July 18, 2012. Passed unanimously with all members present and voting.</p>
<p>Minutes – MOTION</p>	<p>Livak moved and Lewis seconded to approve Selectboard minutes of 09/04/2012. Passed unanimously.</p>
<p>Warrants</p>	<p>6 warrants were signed as presented.</p>
<p>Town Administrator & Highway Department – Barbara Elliott</p> <p><i>FOLLOW-UP: Elliot to send inspection reports</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FEMA work –only Handy and Keir Roads are left to complete. Final inspection by FEMA was approved for all other work. • Clark's Bill - Alger still working to get the Clark's bill reduced for the work on Truck 1. Selectboard advised that Elliott draft a letter if resolution is not reached this week.

<p><i>FOLLOW-UP: Elliot to arrange public meeting</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underground Storage Tank – inspections on Monday. Elliott will take online certification class for the Town • State Bridge Inspection Reports - Elliott to scan and forward the 2 bridge reports to the Selectboard. • Bridge 30 Scoping – Chris Williams from VTrans recommended we reserve 1.25 hours for the presentation and public input on the proposals for fixing Bridge 30. This will be scheduled for October 5th. • Speed Limits – signs on the south end of the Lower Village will be installed this week. • Training – Road Crew & Elliott are taking Front End Loader class tomorrow • Emergency Preparedness – working with BPMS and Fire Chief Jeffrey on a flyer to distribute to Town residents. • Audit – feedback from Fothergill, Segale & Valley is that everything looks to be in great shape and there are no key areas that need to be addressed. • SSTA – working with Special Services Transportation Agency on current demand which is in excess of what our budget will support. One resident requires 3 critical care trips each week, only one of which can be provided by the patient’s family. Seeking alternate assistance for one additional trip. • Still on deck: final FEMA reporting & reimbursement; Animal Control ordinance updates; stray bullet education.
<p>Town Office / Town Hall – Roman Livak</p>	<p>Town Office Repairs – Livak will be meeting to sign a railing contract with one of the vendors – hoping to have this installed by October 1st. Concern was raised about the final design and that sufficient outreach be done to solicit quotes from the potential vendors identified by Terry Boyle.</p> <p>Town Hall – question was raised about whether the painting will be done this fall, and if not, can we combine the bids for the Town Office and Town Hall for painting next summer.</p>
<p>Planning: Agenda for 09/24 Legislative Meeting – Doug Graver <i>FOLLOW-UP: Elliot to send Town Reports; All to send Elliott/Graver agenda items</i></p>	<p>Graver stressed that this is not a campaign event – but rather an opportunity for the Selectboard to discuss fiscal challenges faced by the Town. We will cover types of projects on the Capital Plan, ideas for regional services, and challenges faced by shifting costs from the State to the Towns.</p> <p>Elliott will send copies of the Town Report to the guests.</p>
<p>Other Business <i>FOLLOW-UP: Christiansen & Elliot to develop Budget planning process</i> <i>FOLLOW-UP: Elliot to send Library policies</i></p>	<p>Christiansen will work with Elliott over the next couple of weeks to formulate a plan for tackling this year’s budget work including a timeline, what to ask committee’s to prepare. Key budget work will commence the 1st meeting of November and be wrapped up by December 15th. Graver volunteered to provide a project plan; Christiansen & Barton would like to follow same process as last year.</p> <p>Board would like to get clarification on the Library personnel policies. Elliott to forward copies of Library policies to Selectboard.</p>
<p>Adjournment</p>	<p>Livak moved and Graver seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:16 pm. Passed unanimously.</p>
	<p>09/17/12 – Meeting date 09/23/12 – Preliminary draft minutes to Selectboard / Clerk, Treasurer & Auditors 10/01/12 – Final minutes approved by Selectboard 10/16/12– Approved minutes sent to Town Clerk</p>