

CONSERVATION & TRAILS COMMITTEE (CTC)
Essex Town Offices, 81 Main St., Essex Junction, Vermont 05452

Draft minutes Tuesday 01/11/2022

Members Attending: Alan Botula, Chair, Mike Spaeder Vice Chair, Shannon Jackson, Lauren Gaffney Cohen, Rusty Brink, Betsy Dunn, Clerk.

Staff Support: Darren Schibler

Members of the public attending: Erin DeVries

Meeting was called to order at 6:33 PM by Alan Botula

Agenda Item 1. Public to be heard

Erin De Vries informed us that there are webinars available for us to join in on. Watershed United Vermont has one on January 25th an hour long. Also, there is a grant available from Woody Buffer Block Grant for planting trees in riparian buffers.

Agenda Item 2. Agenda

No changes were made to the agenda

Agenda Item 3. Minutes

Motion was made by Lauren to accept the minutes as written and seconded by Shannon. The vote was unanimous to accept

Agenda Item 4. Annual report

The report was prepared by Darren, and he reviewed the contents to the membership. We had a question about the membership as reported in the document. There is still an open seat on the committee with 3 applicants that have been interviewed by the Selectboard. We would like to see the one that is chosen to be added to the document. A discussion ensued regarding the number of people on the committee. We are interested in increasing our numbers to 9 due to the large amount of work on our docket. After discussion the pros and cons of such a move Shannon made a motion to increase our numbers to 9. It was seconded by Lauren and a vote ensued with a 5:1 in favor of the move (Botula voting "nay"). Plan: Darren will send a note to the Selectboard of our decision and request that all three people interviewed be accepted onto the committee.

A motion was made by Betsy to accept the annual report as written with the addition of the member(s) that may be appointed. Seconded by Shannon. Motion was passed unanimously.

Darren took the opportunity to present the new membership stipend that was passed by the Selectboard and takes effect January 1, 2022. We will be paid 50\$/ meeting if you attend, either in person or remotely. Betsy, as clerk, will send the attendance to Tammy Getchell for compensation. Darren reviewed the forms we would need to fill out to receive the compensation. Mike suggested members could choose to donate stipends to the Conservation Fund.

Betsy brought up the fact that the CRF monies are controlled by the Selectboard. But, if we were a commission, we would have full authority over the money. A discussion on the merits of becoming a commission ensued. As a commission the committee would become a non-profit with a 503c status and we could go after grants not available to us at this time. Lauren volunteered to look into the pros and cons of this move and return to the next meeting with more information.

Agenda Item 5. Grants

- A. We did not receive the Vermont Urban Communities Forests grant on resiliency. There is a second grant from the Vermont Urban Community Forests that we have applied for "Caring for the Canopy". We should hear in 1-2 months if we get it. Darren informed us that as a part of the application we would be doing some of the volunteer work. We all agreed.
- B. EAB. We have to mark the trees that will be removed before January 25, 2022 so that the RFP can be sent out to the contractors. There are 30 trees to be removed, Shannon, Betsy, Alan and potentially Rusty will do the marking. A date was chosen January 17th to do the work. Additionally, as we mark the trees for removal, we can ask the landowners or neighbors if they would be interested in being involved in the Adopt-a-Tree program
Shannon brought up the idea that as a result of the cutting we will have firewood that we could make available to those needing heating assistance. The wood would have to be cured before giving to anyone, therefore, a cost to the town. How to choose who gets it? We can touch base with the VT home heating assistance to help out there. We can also check in with the energy committee for assistance. Lauren and Shannon will follow up.
For Next month's agenda we need to discuss and prepare for Spring clean up

Agenda Item 6. Adopt-A-Tree

The team looked at the work list for the program and closed issued we have already completed. Darren will investigate any support we will need from Public Works and the Parks and recreation department.

The Web infrastructure needs some work. Lauren took a trial run using the dashboard that Pam Brangan of the CCRPC made. She likes how the dashboard is good for tracking trees. We will need a tree ID, adopter, and a link for the adopter to learn the basics of tree care as well as the specifics of their tree. Betsy will work on

getting the links and ask Caitlin at the Essex Free Library if we can use their services for people adopting a tree to make their name tags for the tree they are caring for. Lauren and Rusty will reach out to businesses and organization such as scouts, 4H, Rotary, Lions to ascertain if they would be interested in becoming adoptees as well.

Launch date for the program will be Arbor Day. With some education on trees given to the students involved. It was noted that the Technical Education School here in Essex has a forestry program. We will reach out to them to check on their interest. Last year Horsford Nursery donated 2 trees and Heritage Tree Service planted them. We will reach out to them as well.

A Tree Policy was developed last year that has not yet been approved by the Selectboard. As there has been a large turn over on the committee, we need to have a look at it prior to sending to the Selectboard. This will be added to the agenda for February. Darren will send a copy to the Vermont UCF organization to their input and hopefully a designation of Essex as a "Tree City USA."

Agenda Item 7. Conservation Reserve Fund

Rusty worked with Alan to increase the monies in our Fund. He is seeking out 10 key community members to approach for advice on how to go about doing this. The idea was made to look at matching monies. The town has given us 45 K over a 5-year period that we can leverage in our matching program. We would need to develop talking points so that we are all giving the same information to each person we speak to. The points would include what the money would be used for, pay for easements, landowners to donate land, or for conservation. We might want to check into who in Essex are part of the Current Land Use program.

Agenda Item 8. Development Review

There are three developments that are going to the planning commission in February. One on Brigham Hill Lane that has been resolved no fragmentation of the forest will happen, The Doane/ Fleury development that impacts both Center Rd and Towers Rd has no issues. And the Rail Park Yard development on Rt 177 that has multiple class 2 wetlands has taken the correct steps in providing retention ponds.

Prior to adjourning the meeting it was noted that several people would not be able to present at the next meeting. A Decision to change our next meeting to the first Tuesday of February not the second Tuesday. Therefore, next meeting on February 1st at 6:30

Botula adjourned the meeting at 8:45 pm.