

TOWN OF ESSEX, VERMONT
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CONSERVATION & TRAILS COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes for Tuesday, April 13, 2021, 6:30 p.m.

Members present: Cristine Hammer - Chair, Mike Spaeder, Grace Vinson, Kim Tetreault, Diana Wood - Secretary, Casey Clark, Alan Botula - Vice Chair

with Darren Schibler, Town Planner

Hammer called the meeting to order at 6:33pm

Public Comments

Gwen Kozlowski from the VT Urban and Community Forestry Program joined the meeting to announce that Chuck Vile has been honored with the annual Tree Steward Award. He will be given the Hamilton Award for going above and beyond the call of duty.

Agenda Changes and Approval

Move spring clean up 4th item, add trail mapping update at the end

Member Introductions

Old and new members introduced themselves.

Spring Clean-Up Day Preparations

Discussion began with reference the Memo from Cristine Hammer, in which she wrote that the original intent of the day was to do activities that the Parks & Rec team couldn't do, specifically, clearing invasive (buckthorn). The Committee could add some additional activities that are ideal for social distancing, but P&R didn't have any suggestions. Members suggest that trails mapping might be a good idea, or clean up at Forestdale or Saxon Hill. The group had another idea for a Trail Caretaker seminar at Matthieu with Chuck Vile. Vile notes that cleanup would be good and there are some invasive.

The Committee agrees there be no refreshments this year. Based on expected COVID guidelines we shouldn't need to worry about limiting the number of participants.

May 22nd is the date from 1-3pm. Most Committee members are able to attend.

Mike and Cristine will scout it out this weekend, to be sure there's enough for this activity.

Cristine, Chuck, Diana, Kim can go out and identify it and tag buckthorn. The idea was shared to send the local Scouts to the farther sections to remove buckthorn. Schibler notes that a crew will be out at the McGee access point and they can see what's there as well.

To promote the event Schibler will send Wood the poster layout to update for this year. Finished posters can be left at Maple Street park for us to pick up and hang at trail heads, grocery stores, library etc.

Schibler also notes that Indian Brook passes will be made available to non-residents this year. There was an announcement at Selectboard.

Hammer will share the “to do” list with the members

Approval of Minutes

Hammer asks if there were any changes. there were none. Wood made motion to approve, Spaeder seconds, all approved.

Street Tree Update / Adopt-a-Tree Program

TREE PLANING UPDATE

Schibler shares that we have a grant from VT Urban Forestry for Arbor Day to plant trees at Essex Elementary School. Still need to select the trees and find a landscaping company to prep the site. EAB trees are on order, and the contractor is scheduled to plant them soon. Botula to help scout the locations. Date for planting is TBD (sometime in May). Also notes that the Town applied for another grant to get additional tree(s) for Arbor Day.

Clark asked for more details. Botula explains the school was asked to help, and the principle agreed. the 2nd graders will help. Hammer add that the school realized how little shade the school grounds had, after spending so much time outside for learning

Hammer to write the press release. Invite VT Digger, Seven Day, Essex Reporter etc.

Schibler drafted the Proclamation that can be used for our Tree City USA certification. To be read at the tree planting at the school

ADOPT A TREE PROGRAM

Having an Adopt-A-Tree program can support new trees that are planted and participants can monitor ash trees that are being selected to save. To be determined is how the Committee can support this initiative.

Botula notes that one possibility can be to offer guidance to selecting trees based on health, not just preference. Hammer adds that we should take a look at identified trees in the inventory before hand, hopefully with Chuck Vile. Schibler adds that professional outfits Trees Vermont and Heritage Tree Care have offered to present to people. We could offer a public workshop/seminar. Perhaps an in-person event or online, or hybrid. Botula to explore what others are doing for they program.

Emerald Ash Borer awareness week is in May, perhaps a sign up for more info and we can plan our event for later in the early summer.

Hammer suggests that next meeting we create an ad-hoc committee for this initiative

Development Review

Next Thursday the 22nd is the next Planning Commission Meeting

21 Essex Way is expanding their green, by removing 17 parking spaces and adding a small barn for a performance stage. Schibler mentioned his request for additional bike racks.

River Road subdivision that separates lots for existing buildings that includes bike/ped easement

Vinson asks about floodplain and river corridor zoning plans. Schibler notes that there is some river corridor guidance, but needs to be updated.

Conversation also included to potential to using federal funds through the state to buy back floodplain building through ARPA (American Recovery Plan Act)

Preview of Woodside Juvenile detention center as a mental health facility. It is to be demolished and rebuilt. Will be seen again.

Reading File

Tiny grants are available from VT Conservation Association

Free Book Wildlife and Habitat are going to the library

Shared use path on Rt 15

iNaturalist app for fun <https://www.inaturalist.org/>

Trail Mapping update

Spaeder notes that McHose has been actively mapping them and they're working on connecting trails. Botula will ask about the write ups status and he'd like to get these projects done.

Schibler asks about the trailhead off of Woodlawn regarding the bridge and earthwork. Spaeder explains that it may have been done to make access easier. Still needs some clean up. Spaeder can report back with more info.

Hammer mentions that next meeting we should start with the work plan

Hammer called the meeting called to end at 8:05pm