

Cornwall Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Tuesday March 10, 2020
7:00-8:30 pm, Cornwall Town Hall

CC Members present: Katherine Branch (KB), Mary Dodge (MD), Brian Howlett (BH), Mike Sheridan (MS)

Visitors: Jake Chaplin, Anna Burns, Don Burns

Regretfully absent: Rene Langis (RL), Bethany Barry (BB)

Recording Secretary: KB

Old Business:

--Outreach Programs. Conserving Lands Panel. RL is the lead Conservation Commission member working on this program. Post-meeting update: RL had arranged for representatives from VLT, TNC and MALT to be on this panel. Date was scheduled for April 1st, 6:30 pm. (Update: Given the nearness of the date and the uncertainty about the virus, RL and MD decided to postpone the panel.)

-- "Migration: Welcoming Summer Birds to Cornwall". Audubon Vermont's Education staff member, Debbie Archer, will speak to the elementary school on April 30th from 1:45-2:30. A presentation for the town led by Audubon's conservation biologist, Margaret Fowler will take place that evening at 7:00 pm at the School. Conservation Commission members should plan on attending this evening event, and coming early to help set up. Friday, May 1st BH & MS help kids build bird shelves at the school. On Saturday, May 9th, Margaret Fowler will give a walk, open to the public, in Cornwall. (Update: The program has been canceled.)

--Wildlife Road Crossing Documentation Project. Partial funding for purchase of 4 game cameras came from the Fund for Public Trust and MD has them in hand. Preliminary evidence from the ecological overlays, and additional evidence from hunters and landowners, suggest definable wildlife connectivity routes. This project would determine where these primary wildlife crossings are and determine more precisely how much wildlife is crossing in surveyed areas. A useful contact at Fish & Wildlife might be Katie Kain, Wildlife Biologist at Lake Champlain Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office.

--Spring Amphibian Road Rescue. MD, BB, Lise Anderson, and Andrew Menkart, involved in this. Any else interested should join them. Volunteer training on Sunday, March 15 at Town Hall at 6:30 pm. Update: Training has been cancelled because of corona virus concerns. Crossing rescue work by last year's volunteers will continue this spring. On the evening of March 10th, escort teams crossed 100 amphibians, mainly frogs, many salamanders, and a few toads.

Swamp Reclassification Project Update. Next steps for the project are unclear at the point. Next meeting of the Reclassification Committee is Tuesday, March 17th.

Planning Commission and Select Board Updates. MS will contact SB Chair, Ben Marks, about opening up additional communication channels between the CCC and the SB about the mission of the CCC.

DRB: Beaver Brook Approval. The CCC's environmental impact review and testimony focused on several concerns. We requested that an evaluation by the State's DEC staff be completed on the property's wetland areas designated for residential development. Evidence of a Class II wetland was found and these were mapped. The CCC also successfully advocated for Lot 10 to be protected from residential or commercial development. Lot 10 provides important wildlife connectivity habitat along the property's north side between the forested areas to the east and the natural areas to the west. And, the CCC's letter of support describing the ecological importance of Beaver Brook and its forest adjacent was an important part of Vermont Land Trust's successful application to the VHCB for a conservation easement on the 125 acres on the property's east side. This area will be protected from any development involving residential or commercial uses through a restrictive covenant placed on it.

New Business:

Conservation Fund Study Group. CCC will start gathering data on how other towns have created a conservation fund, then we will review other further actions in the summer or early fall.

Brochure Suggestion. Jake reported on his review of the Georgetown Stewardship Guide. While he felt that this type of publication was not a useful model for Cornwall, he did make suggestions about how the CC could promote conservation-related content: having a conservation section of books in the town library, have conservation resources on the town website, and put together a pamphlet about "what and where sites" in Cornwall.

Bulletin Board, Lending Library, Website, Wildlife Map: Tabled

Membership: Anna and Jake shared their interest in conservation work.

Date for next meeting. TBD

Newsletter: April '20 (March: Bethany), July '20 (June: Mike), October '20 (September: Katherine)