

Cornwall Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes

August 19, 2020

The meeting was called to order at 12:30 pm by Mary Dodge, Chair. Present were Mary Dodge, Michael Sheridan, Katherine Branch, Rene Langis, Anna Burns and Don Burns (Cornwall Planning Commission). The following items were discussed:

- 1) Status of the Conservation Fund Study Group: The Article approved at '20 Town Meeting supported "the creation of a Conservation Fund Planning Group that will study how towns in Vermont have funded their conservation activities" and stated that their findings and recommendations will be reported at the 2021 town meeting.
 - a. Katherine reported that she has accessed several resources (listserv with 40 towns with Conservation Funds listed; town websites, emails to CC chairs/members in other towns). While many of the towns on the listserv have money in their conservation funds, some do not.
 - b. Katherine is gathering information available online and is awaiting responses from people already contacted. She says there is much that is anecdotal in nature. Anna and Mike (knows one CC member in Monkton) will help with contacting additional CC folks in adjacent towns.
 - c. This information will be gathered and incorporated into a report to the town.
 - d. The question was raised why we need a report at all. Instead, just ask the town for the money at the next Town Meeting. Mary said a report is what was voted for at the Town Meeting. It was suggested a report/presentation be short and to the point.
 - e. The agreed upon plan is to complete the report and present it to the town after discussing it at the Nov. CCC meeting.
- 2) Wildlife Documentation Project:
 - a. Mary reported that 2 of the 4 cameras were recently moved to new locations. She is hopeful that they are in sites that have more usage by wildlife.
 - b. Since Greg Borah, the tracking consultant who helped set up the cameras, does not want to be paid for his time, Mary is using the funds in the grant to buy fifth camera.
 - c. Mary has asked Kim Royer, a wildlife specialist from Fish & Wildlife, to help the CC review and refine the goals of the project.
 - d. Our cameras have substantiated that two of the camera sites are being used regularly by a variety of wildlife.
- 3) Design Review Board Applications: Mary and Rene have reviewed one variance application to add a small building to a lot.
- 4) Zoom Panel: Rene has continued planning efforts to have a zoom meeting with a panel to speak on how citizens/landowners can conserve land in Cornwall; hoping for a meeting in October.
 - a. Vermont Land Trust is seen to be the most logical organization to present as they are actively engaged in land conservations among individuals owning residential

land and/or farmland, not conservancy prospects such as swamp, rare habitats, etc.

- b. It was suggested for Rene to contact Justus DeVries to see if he could give a general overview of the conservation processes and how they are structured financially to benefit landowners as well as serving the public interest.

5) Planning Commission

- a. Don Burns (Planning Commission) reported that the PC has not yet begun work on the new Forest Fragmentation section of the Town Plan.
- b. The Select Board is recommending setting aside the 2019 LUDR draft and instead updating the current 2008 zoning regs, which will include incorporating many recommendations made by the Zoning Administrator. The Planning Commission is meeting later today to respond to the new edits from Ben Marks (Select Board Chair).
- c. Ben Marks has inserted a Habitat Connectivity Overlay District based on Waltham's connectivity overlay in their new zoning regulations. He recommends using the map of Cornwall ecological special features overlay in the current LUDR Draft. He is also recommending including a river corridor overlay. Mary will circulate Ben's edited text for CC members review and will forward the CC's comments to the PC and SB.

- 6) Swamp Reclassification: A letter is going out this week to Swamp property owners and abutters asking them to indicate whether or not they support the CC's continued work on an application to reclassify Cornwall Swamp as a Class I Wetlands. A postcard will be included with the letter on which they can indicate their preference. It is to be returned by the end of the month.

- 7) Foote Farm Reforestation Model: Anna shared how the planting of trees is important on many levels. Could the work at Foote Farm a model for a larger Cornwall effort?

- a. Can we visit the FF planted areas? Can we work with families who may want to do something similar?
- b. We will take some more time to think about and discuss this as a project of the CCC.
- c. Anna is working on getting a video together showing the FF children digging up and planting their seedlings – children ages 4 – 15 participated.
- d. Anna will consult the USDA folks and the County Forester about resources for the CCC to expand this model elsewhere in Cornwall.

- 8) Next Meeting: Wednesday, September 23, 12:30 pm.