

Minutes

Cornwall Conservation Commission Meeting [via Zoom]

Wednesday, July 22, 2020, 12:30 – 2:00 pm

Attending: Mike Sheridan, Mary Dodge, Rene Langis, Anna Burns, Katherine Branch (meeting recorder)

Guest: Don Burns

The purpose of meeting was to review progress for the Cornwall Conservation Commission and to welcome new member Anna Burns.

1. Discussion regarding outreach programs via Zoom. The panel on conserving land might translate well into a Zoom meeting and it could be publicized more widely than just Cornwall. There doesn't seem to be any technical limitation to number of people in a Zoom meeting. The focus would be on the definition of conservation easements, how to set them up, and what are their advantages. To try to determine turnout in advance, we could contact the Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions (AVCC) and see what their turnout has been on their Zoom meetings. Rene will pursue this. Salisbury is doing their bumblebee program via Zoom later in the month and we can check with them as well. (Update: the Salisbury CC reported that were over 100 Zoom participants.)
2. Salisbury swamp reclassification. Rene and Mary are still considering sending a letter with reply postcard to town landowners and abutters to ask if they support Swamp reclassification. Rene and Mary will determine whether to proceed. (Decision made: letters will be sent out mid-August for end of the month post card return.)
3. The CCC received two grants for the Trail Camera Project, one from Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions and the other from the Cornwall Trustees for Public Funds. So far, results have shown that the two productive sites (in terms of numbers of animal crossing sightings) are on the Significant Features Connectivity Habitat Map, the less productive ones are not on the Map. How to convert this information into a data set? This project should show seasonality and also should incorporate the data into an easily accessible format. Kim Royer (special assistant to the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department Commissioner) did bobcat tracing and collaring in Shelburne area, and Mary will contact her to discuss how Cornwall can think about wildlife and wildlife crossings.
4. DRB review. Rene & Mary have been active in this area. Mary reviewed various recent DRB decisions.
5. Select Board meeting. The CC presented our activities to the SB at their May 5th meeting. There was a question about the River Watch work. Rene will check in with River Watch to determine the status of monitoring rivers and brooks in Cornwall.
6. Andrew L'Roe from Addison County Regional Planning Commission gave an introductory presentation on Forest Fragmentation on July 21st at a joint meeting of the Planning Commission (PC) and Select Board (SB). The PC will soon be working on adding a Forest Fragmentation piece to the Town Plan and they felt it would be helpful to involve the SB early on in this effort. The PC's plan is to review the ANR state maps in terms of habitat

and forest connectivity blocks and then see how they connect with general areas of interest as reflected in the results of the Values Mapping Workshop. If an area has value as forest block plus value for recreation and hunting, it would support setting this area aside as important to the community.

7. LUDR. The SB has completed a review of Article 2 of the draft. The PC will be considering their proposed changes. The Select Board revisions suggest Waltham's Forest and Habitat Connectivity Overlay (2019) could be a good model for changes in the SFO section of the LUDR. Mary will send out the Waltham SFO section to the entire CCC.
8. Conservation Fund study group to come up with recommendations based on what other towns do. The study group will analyze the data already existing from AVCC. We could send out an email from Sue asking if others were interested and to contact us. Don is supporting the effort from the PC. The CCC can set up a Zoom town meeting on this, if it seems useful, calling an open meeting in which people can participate. Katherine will pull together the data and write up a preliminary draft. One open question is how will the project be presented prior to Town Meeting in 2021.
9. Foote Farm Tree Project. Anna Burns updated the CCC on this project. Last winter residents, primarily in Foote Farm, wanted to do a reforestation project for habitat restoration. So far 350 trees and bushes have been planted, 6 households have planted 275 bushes and trees. 70 plants are on common land. One area has stopped being mowed. This project has proven to be a very good family activity.
10. Next CCC meeting is in August Wednesday the 19th, 12:30 to 1:30 via Zoom.