

Cornwall Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Monday, April 19, 2021
12:30-2:00 pm, Zoom Teleconference

CC Members: Katherine Branch, Don Burns, Sharon DeHaven, Mary Dodge, Mike Sheridan. Also attending: Paul Urband

Recording Secretary: Katherine

Old Business:

1. Conservation Fund. Katherine reviewed the progress of the working group, composed of members of the Select Board, Conservation Commission and Planning Commission, which is refining the policies and procedures for the Conservation Fund. A close-to-final draft will be ready by May 17th, after which the document will be distributed to the SB, CC and PC for their approval.
2. CC Friends support group. Katherine and Don drafted an "initial thoughts" document about the possibility of forming a "friends" group that would support conservation efforts in Cornwall, following up on Don's suggestion at the CC March meeting. The document covered possible names, mission, goals, benefits, dues structure and other considerations. CC members made varying points about the possible group including:
 - Overall a good idea but need to keep it simple
 - Would the overall purpose be educational or fund-raising? Or both?
 - In order to come to fruition, at least one CC member would need to walk this through into a reality
 - In Mary and Katherine's phone calls to Town residents about the Conservation Fund, we had four people say they would be willing to help, or at least brainstorm, about fund-raising
 - Fund-raising is most successful with a dollar goal, matching funds (perhaps a challenge match), and paired with an activity
 - Fund-raising needs to answer the question, what goal are the dollars needed for?
 - Think of this group as building a network, either a network of activists or a network of funders. Or a grassroots idea generator with fund-raising as just one aspect. Have the network take the initiative on what direction to go.
 - Developing a group with an identity focused on interest in conservation, then perhaps later focus on specific projects
 - What would be the benefits for group members?
 - The importance of making the group attractive to young people and families

There was also discussion about whether reconsidering some type of project involving Douglas Pond was desirable. The outcome of the discussion was a general sense that the CC should work informally with the four people previously identified by Mary and Katherine, but that we wouldn't start until the Conservation Fund procedure/policy-writing project was finished.

3. Programming - '21-'22.

Conservation Outreach. Discussion about updating the CC pamphlet and also having a way to keep the web site up to date, perhaps by having someone other than the Chair take responsibility for regularly updating the web site. We could also explore cooperative activities with groups like Otter Creek Audubon and Lewis Creek Association. And activities could also have a seasonal focus. We tabled these ideas for discussion at our next meeting.

Backyard Conservation Activities. Mary proposed that the CC have a theme for the year, backyard conservation activities. This would give some shape to our programming and a particular focus. One idea is a fall, probably October, program on pollinators, led by Andrew Munkres, a Cornwall resident who is also the president of the Vermont Beekeepers Association. The program would be outside without a limit on number of attendees. We would keep a Zoom format as a backup if in-person gatherings seem unwise in the fall. Another idea is to pair the outdoor activity with online activities, possibly "pre-canned" so they wouldn't be too much work for the CC. For example, UVM Extension offers a pollinator friendly landscape course for \$30 and VT Fish & Wildlife has a pre-recorded webinar on enhancing your backyard that includes information on pollinators: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gRvuekJzwWM>. Mike indicated that one of his students works with BeeTheChange, which works to plant for pollinators on solar panel fields.

The CC will have a brainstorming session on other program ideas at a future meeting.

4. The Trail Camera Project is continuing. In terms of amphibian road rescue, the teams that went out on rainy nights this spring did not find many amphibians crossing and Jim Andrews, herpetologist, told Mary that he thought that most amphibians had already crossed, hopefully successfully.
5. DRB & Planning Commission Updates. Don and Mary presented to the DRB regarding the Schaefer event venue proposal and have submitted a review for the 5 Trillium project also. CC members indicated that they

would like to continue to receive the DRB proposals and CC review documents.

New Business:

1. CC Brochure and Web Page Review (covered above).
2. Knotweed Removal. Mary said that there is a 20' x 20' patch of knotweed on the western corner of West Street and Route 125 that had been brought to her attention by a West Street resident late last fall. Because of the highly invasive nature of knotweed along waterways, they immediately contacted various people and agencies to discuss its eradication as well as to investigate recommended practices for this. The patch is on state land and F&W has agreed to do an herbicide spraying mid-summer. To keep the plants in check, it is recommended doing 2-3 cuttings of shoot growth before the mid-summer spraying; Mary is working on a plan for this.

Date for next meeting. April 17th (12:30-2:00)

Newsletter: July '21 (June) October '21 (September); January '20 (December); April '21 (March)