

CORNWALL CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

MONDAY, JULY 19, 2021

Members Present: Don Burns, Sharon De Haven, Mary Dodge, Michael Sheridan.

Absent: Katherine Branch

Recording Secretary: Sharon De Haven

Old Business:

1. Conservation Reserve Fund: Procedures & Application:

The Select Board approved Conservation Fund procedures at their July 6th meeting. Katherine sent notes about how she planned to make the application form available in pdf form at Town Hall and on our website (with introduction.) She would like to have it be available to residents as soon as possible.

2. Outreach Programming for “2021-22”:

- “Get Pollinated” presentation: a “master of ceremonies” for the September 16th presentation at the De Haven’s property at 2011 N. Bingham Street will be needed. Katherine will contact possible people.
- The CC Welcome Letter to new Cornwall residents and the updated trifold CC brochure are close to ready. Don suggested several small edits in the trifold and Mary said she would pass them along to Katherine. Katherine will ask Peter McCormick to help with the changes in the brochure. The Welcome Letter distribution will be to approximately twenty landowners per year who have recently moved into Cornwall. Sue will provide a list of property transfers to facilitate the mailing of brochure/welcome letter and provide envelopes and stamps. Sharon will do the printing and mailing of the letters and brochures, with some initial help from Mary.
- Discussion continued on the how to focus our Backyard conservation efforts. The idea of a CC Backyard Blog was discussed. A blog “lives” permanently on the web, phone, or email and the administrator would respond to blog entries on-line. As a town institution the CC blog would be “open”, i.e., the blog would exist for those with an inquiry. A blog is

akin to an on-line diary. The latest post appears first in reverse chronological order with the latest posts appearing first, at the top. An example is the Dummerston Conservation Commission blog:

<http://dummerstonconservation.com/>

- Don suggested the possibility of a group of interested townspeople traveling to Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historic Park in Woodstock for a private conservation-focused museum tour. He invited that CC members to visit the Park before the next CC meeting to see for themselves whether this would be worth considering.
 - Mike suggested that the '20 backyard bird presentation by VT Audubon staff and a school-based birdhouse construction project might be rescheduled. When the details of the '21-'22 school year are clearer, the CC will give this consideration.
3. Wildlife Trail Camera: This is the second year for this project. Mary monitors the cameras and continues to move four of the six cameras periodically. To date, the majority of camera placements have been in the northeast quadrant of Cornwall and she would like to expand to locations in the southern part of town. Mike suggested making a request in the town newsletter for people to host trail cameras, as well as possible resource persons for placements and analysis of the data collected to date.
 4. The Select Board is considering a video conferencing system for the Town Hall that will allow people to participate in town meetings either in person or by Zoom. The Planning Commission is continuing its work on the development of a new flood resilience section to the Town Plan plus other areas that need updates. Forest Integrity will be one of the next sections considered and the CC hopes to contribute to its drafting. An updated town plan will, in turn, inform the zoning regulations.
 5. Knotweed: Mary is working with Toni Mikula from Vt. Fish and Wildlife who completed an herbicide treatment on the 20' x 20' West Street knotweed

patch in early July. In late August/early September (before the frost), this area will again be sprayed with herbicide. Monitoring and treatment will be necessary in 2022 to eliminate the possibility of the knotweed's reestablishing itself and spreading to the Lemon Fair River.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Conversation with Zoning Administrator: Mary's conversation with the Cornwall ZA indicates that the current zoning laws do not protect the majority of the town's important natural resources identified in the Ecological Inventory or on state databases. There are some protective regulations in the subdivision bylaws. Don suggested that, if the zoning regulations should do more to protect the environment, it would be useful to know what other towns do in this area. In turn, this information would be helpful to the planning commission. Mary also talked with Zapata Courage from the VT Department of Environmental Conservation about how to report possible environmental violations to Vermont regulations. Zapata suggested that the best course of action is to use DEC's online reporting portal. A submission can be done anonymously if desired. It will detail the information that is needed to start an investigation.
<https://dec.vermont.gov/content/environmental-violation-report> Any materials such as maps showing location in question, timeframes, photos, etc. would be very helpful. An enforcement officer will be assigned and, if there is a violation, they typically pull in a DEC specialist to provide restoration directives or permitting options to have the landowner come back into compliance.
2. Douglas Pond Walk: Michael, Don and Mary walked with adjacent landowner, Eric Mortensen. Eric shared a history of the pond's purchase by the town in the early 1970s and its subsequent use as a recreational area. Currently it is used for ice-skating in the winter, with parking roadside. It would be extremely expensive to revitalize the pond as a swimming area and perhaps should it be left as is. But might there be some interest among

townspeople in creating a modest pond trail with a small, off-road parking area that would support usage year around?

3. Don described the invitation Cornwall CC received to participate in the Otter Creek Tactical Basin Plan project that will begin in the months ahead. As details become clearer, Don will share them with the CC. Meanwhile Don and Mary will review the stream buffering documentation from Amy Sheldon's and Brett Engstrom's reports.

Next meeting: In person at Town Hall, Monday August 16th, 12:30 – 2:00 PM.
Mary will provide snacks.