

Cornwall Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Monday, February 8, 2021
12:30-1:30 pm, Zoom Teleconference

Present: Mary Dodge, Michael Sheridan, Katherine Branch

Absent: Brian Howlett

Planning Commission liaison: Don Burns

Guests: Paul Urband and Sharon DeHaven

Recording Secretary: Katherine Branch

Old Business:

1. CC Membership. The operation of Conservation Commission was briefly reviewed followed by CCC members as well as guests introducing themselves.
2. Conservation Fund. For the benefit of the meeting guests, Mary reviewed the history of the Cornwall Conservation Fund, which was a listed priority in the Town Plan. Cornwall's Conservation Fund was established in 2016 by the Select Board, but no money was put into the Fund at that time. In 2020, an Article was passed at Town Meeting to study how other Vermont towns put monies into their Conservation Funds, and the CCC engaged in comprehensive research and outreach during this study.
 - a. Procedures & Criteria Working Group. Katherine reviewed the work of the Conservation Fund Procedures and Criteria working group, which consists of two Select Board members, two Conservation Commission members and one Planning Commission member (Magna Dodge, John Roberts, Mary Dodge, Katherine Branch and Don Burns). The group was formed because the two documents that currently govern the Conservation Fund need more specificity, clarity and enumeration of procedures and processes. The group has met once via Zoom and has access to a number of very useful documents from other Vermont towns that govern their Conservation Funds.
 - b. Town Meeting Informational meeting: CF PowerPoint & Meeting support. Mary displayed the PowerPoint presentation that the CCC developed for presentation at the Town information meeting on Monday, February 22nd. It was decided that the statement in the PowerPoint about towns with more conserved acreage having lower property taxes would be removed, because it is distracting to the purpose of the presentation, which is to provide information about the Fund itself, its purposes, and the amount being requested.
3. Trail Camera Project. There are five cameras out now, with a total of 13 locations so far. Several cameras are stationery and others have been moved to new locations. Mary now has someone to help with the data entry, which has been a very time-consuming. Mary is also trying to encourage residents to also do reporting and possibly set up a second web site where residents can record animals and animal tracks that they see. One camera was removed without authorization, and Mary would like to purchase

another one to replace it. Lockboxes and cables will cost about half the price of a camera, so it seems that relocating the cameras to be less visible is the better option. Mary said that she will present some preliminary observations from the project at the next CCC meeting and a decision will be made then about replacing the camera.

4. Mike spoke about having a high school student in the International Baccalaureate (IB) program which would have the students have opportunity to do hands-on civics and science be a member of the CCC. Keith Wilkerson is coordinator of the IB program and a biology teacher at the high school. Mike has written a paragraph describing this opportunity and the CCC reviewed it and approved it. Mike would be the Conservation Commission mentor for this activity.

New Business:

1. Outreach 2021: What? When? The CCC's activities were reviewed. Ongoing work: Development Review Board reviews—the CCC completes an environmental review form for all subdivision and variance applications before the DRB in which the potential impact of the application on important natural resources is described. The CCC also contributes a column to the Town Newsletter in each issue. Initiatives: The Conservation Fund and Trail Camera project are both newer initiatives. Another new focus will be assisting the Planning Commission in addressing requirement by the State to include forest fragmentation in town plans. Outreach programs raise public awareness of the town's special natural resources and the importance of their conservation. They include an informative CCC web site, hikes, and presentations. Possible programs in 2021-22 might include: trash cleanup, pollinators, photo contest with Recreation Committee. One idea would be to have the student "intern" research what other towns are doing and make suggestions about what would be useful in Cornwall. In response to a question, Paul Urband reviewed the Trout in Classroom program in which a fish-tank was placed in the Cornwall School, as well as other related activities. A further, fuller discussion of work in the coming year will occur at the March meeting of the CCC.

Date for next meeting. Not set yet.

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