

Waterbury Conservation Commission  
Minutes  
February 11, 2020  
(DRAFT)

Commission Attendees: Allan Thompson, Krista Battles, Erin Hurley, Tracey Sweeney, Billy Vigdor

Absent Commissioners: Joan Beard, Steve Hagenbuch, Mike Hedges

Public: Linda Gilpin

- Minutes: The Commission reviewed, discussed and unanimously approved slightly modified minutes of the Commission meeting of January 14, 2020. Krista will finalize the approved minutes and will provide them to Allan for submission.
- Public Comments: Linda Gilpin attended the meeting and expressed her desire to be nominated as a Commissioner. Linda explained her interest in conservation and development issues as well as her background. Allan is going to submit a nomination for Linda to the Select Board for a three-year term beginning in April 2020.
- Budget:
  - The Commission voted to alter the order of the agenda to accommodate a scheduling conflict and to discuss the budget. Erin explained her outreach to the Town and provided budget summaries. Any 2019 funds that were unused in 2019 continue to be available to the Commission in 2020. The Town Manager has agreed to continue funding the Commission at prior levels, \$700 per year. Funds raised by the Commission will be itemized separately from funds allocated by the Town of Waterbury to comply with spending restrictions on Town Funds. For example, Town Funds (taxpayer dollars) cannot be used to acquire land or easements. For 2020, the Commission's total assets are \$1,378.18, which nets out accounts payable of \$200.
  - The Commission discussed dues payments to the Association of Conservation Commissioners. Allan paid the 2019 dues on behalf of the Commission and is going to ask for reimbursement. Erin is going to pay the 2020 dues.
  - The Commission discussed 2020 ideas and projects. Allan explained that historically, Commission priorities were set at the suggestion of individual Commissioners. Notable 2019 work of the Commission included education projects regarding the Shutesville Hill Wildlife Corridor (in conjunction with the Shutesville Hill Wildlife Corridor Partnership and Makers Sphere), the preparation of comments to proposed Town By Laws, mapping of invasive species and supporting the Town in its effort to acquire a mower that would enable the town to reduce the invasive species along Town roads.

- The Commission discussed exploring possible 2020 projects, which included:
  - Reviewing the Commission Website, possibly adding photos from the game camera project.
  - Continued community involvement and outreach.
  - Getting involved in Act 250 changes, particularly as it applies to preserving forests and conservation blocks.
  - Reviewing the status of efforts to aggregate small, privately owned forest blocks and contributing them to carbon markets.
  - Hosting presentations or asking experts to explain their work to the Commission; one example was to have a presentation on sustainability modeling.
  - Participate in a water quality testing (see below)
  
- Secretary:
  - Krista agreed to be the Commission Secretary beginning immediately.
  
  - The Commission discussed Allan's possible resignation as Chair. Erin articulated the Commission's view that Allan's role and continued involvement is vital to the Commission's continued success. The Commission discussed ways of reducing the burdens on Allan, especially administrative burdens. This would free Allan to address larger policy directives and other larger issues, such as commenting on proposed Town By Laws and the Game Camera project. The Commission discussed both formal informal ways to achieve the goal, including appointing a Vice Chairman, who would be tasked with overseeing the administrative aspects of the Commission.
  
- Town By Laws:
  - The short-term goal is for the Commission to prepare a proposal that would identify a high priority area to conserve in order to protect migratory patterns, forest connectivity and wildlife habitat. The area that the Commission seeks to protect is depicted on a map distributed by Allan late last year titled "Proposed Overlay District Highest Priority Conservation Block" (Priority Area Map). The areas to be protected are the highest priority to be protected based on state-of-the-art sustainability models and were prepared by the Wildlife Division of the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. Development within the area, even small parcels, would interfere with the pattern of migration, both plant and animal migration. The Commission discussed preparing, possibly asking for, a presentation from the Fish & Wildlife Department, to better understand the science behind the Priority Area Map and to be able to explain the science to the Planning Commission.

- The Commission discussed whether there was a preference to have a separate overlay district for the priority area or use the Ridge Lines, Hillsides and Steep Slopes Overlay District as a starting point.
- Water Quality Testing: Krista explained that the Friends of the Winooski had obtained a grant to test water quality of rivers and streams flowing into the Winooski. The tests would provide a baseline for the water quality of some Winooski River water sources. The Commission agreed to assist. The testing would be needed at three locations and needed to be performed simultaneously, twice per month in each of June, July and August. There was agreement to test the water along the Thatcher Brook. In particular, the Commission discussed testing at (1) the corner of Guptil Road and Route 100, (2) where Thatcher Brook enters the Winooski, and (3) at a higher elevation of the Thatcher Brook. This would cover a great deal of the Town and allow to test several points along the Thatcher Brook. Krista will approach the Crossett Brook Middle School sustainability teacher to determine if students would like to participate in the testing activities.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 pm.