

## NORWICH CONSERVATION COMMISSION ZOOM MEETING DRAFT MINUTES: 19 APRIL 2022

Members Present: Craig Layne (chair), Lynnwood Andrews, Cheryl Asa, Alex Gottlieb, Suzanne Leiter, Chris Rimmer, Charlotte Tagupa,

Guests: Tammy Heesakker, Pam Smith, Brie Swenson

Meeting convened at 7:05PM

Craig asked for any public comments, but there were none.

Craig introduced new Commission member Alex Gottlieb.

Cheryl gave an update of arrangements for the vernal pool visit on Saturday to be led by Kevin Tolan. Since the number of registrants has reached 27, we will need to schedule a second visit. Craig offered to lead that visit and will find a date and time. Lynnwood then gave an update on the new vernal pool in the Milt Frye Nature Area (MFNA). It is successfully holding water from the snow melt and rain, so Lindsay Putnam and her students will be "seeding" it with appropriate plant material and invertebrates needed to support frog and salamander breeding, in preparation for next year's breeding season.

Lynnwood asked about planning for upcoming Norwich Times articles. Since the fee per article has increased, we may need to reduce the number each year to three instead of four to stay within budget. There was a discussion of possible topics for the next issue, and it was decided that Lynnwood and Chris will collaborate to write about grassland birds, which will tie into the new MFNA mowing schedule and kestrel nesting box. We might also build on that topic by inviting Kevin Tolan to give a talk on Vermont's grassland birds.

Craig reported that grant funding has been secured for the Huntley Meadow riparian planting, but volunteers will be needed to spread mulch and gravel. Trout Unlimited has committed to help with maintenance.

Suzanne said that forester Tii (Elisabeth) McLane has agreed to lead a forest walk on Sunday, June 12, in the Woody Adams Conservation Area. She will highlight the interactions between wildlife and woodlands, especially the effects of heavy deer browse on forest regeneration.

Tammy Heesakker asked if the NCC would be interested in helping promote an initiative that would enlist volunteers to take photos of roadside invasive plants and submit them to iNaturalist, to produce maps of the distribution of invasives. The first target date would be Green-Up Day, on May 7. Tammy will make informational posters that can be distributed along with the Green-Up Day bags which will be available at Norwich Town Hall and the Transfer Station. Notices can also be placed in the Norwich listserv.

Lynnwood asked about ways to promote the idea of "No Mow May", which asks that lawns not be mowed early in the season, so vegetation for pollinators can become established. The Xerces Society, through their Bee City USA initiative, has produced signs that it encourages people to download, print and display to promote the movement. Suzanne and Lynnwood will work together on signs for Norwich residents who commit to the program to post in their yards.

Lynnwood reported that the kestrel nesting box has been installed at the edge of the MFNA meadow. Although it might be too late for breeding season this year, the box will be monitored for signs of activity. She is planning a workday to get plants into the ground around the vernal pool and will start invasive plant removal work again soon.

Craig asked for comments on the two draft memoranda to the Selectboard on behalf of the Trails Committee. One provides an inventory of the network of trails in Norwich and the role of the Trails Committee in maintaining them, information that provides context for their annual budgetary requests. The other requests that the Selectboard lower the load limits on a portion of Burton Woods Road to mitigate damage and erosion. There were no suggestions for revisions.

Craig visited Schmidt bog along with Cody and Lynnwood. They identified areas with extensive buckthorn that should be removed and a boardwalk in need of repair. The Trails Committee is willing to do the work on the boardwalk, and neighboring residents have expressed interest in helping with some projects. They are especially concerned with over-browsing by deer. An inventory of wild orchids would also be useful.

Craig asked about any reports from other committees, commissions or boards that might be relevant to the NCC. The School Board and Selectboard are discussing wastewater and septic issues.

Charlotte gave an update on the NCC Instagram account. Because of some problems with the previous account, a new one has been created. Members were reminded to send Charlotte information about any events and volunteer opportunities for posting. Charlotte also mentioned that the high school is planning a workday pulling invasives.

Lynnwood moved to approve the March 2022 minutes, Chris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

NCC members extend a huge "Thank you" to Norm Miller for his many years of service on the NCC. His enthusiasm for environmental issues and conservation were and continue to be much appreciated. Among his many accomplishments for the Commission was spearheading "Norwich Bird Week" in 2017, a weeklong event that celebrated the beauty and wonder of birds, featuring public talks, films, field outings, a Boy Scout demonstration, and a bird art show. Norm has been and continues to be a wonderful partner of the Norwich Recreation Department. His passion for the outdoors is infectious, and he always brings a sense of wonder into a conversation, inspiring us to ask and learn more about our environment. We value his many contributions to all ages in the community. Even though Norm is stepping down from being a commissioner, we look forward to a continuing partnership with him working on engaging youth in conservation, public education series, and other topics he brings to the Commission.

The meeting adjourned at 8:22PM

Minutes compiled by Cheryl Asa