

## NORWICH CONSERVATION COMMISSION ZOOM MEETING DRAFT MINUTES: 21 JULY 2020

Members present: Craig Layne (chair), Lynnwood Andrews, Cheryl Asa, Courtney Dragiff, David Hubbard, Sage McGinley-Smith, Normal Miller, Cody Williams

Absent: Chris Rimmer

Guests: Jordan Fields, Brie Swenson, George Clark, Linda Cook, Doug Hardy, Chris Moore

Meeting convened at 7:10 pm

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

Jordan Fields, graduate student at Dartmouth, presented a report on “Charles Brown Brook Recovery Following Dam Removal”. Dam removal is one approach for restoring more natural ecosystem functions, but major disruptions can follow as sediment built up behind the dam is released. To better understand this process, effects of removal of the Charles Brown Brook dam were monitored. Various techniques were used to monitor brook changes during the year following dam removal, including terrestrial LiDAR scanning, pebble counts and active tracer rocks, each with an RFID chip and accelerometer. These produced data on topographic information about changes along channel banks, and the extent and rate of sediment transport. A channel to direct water flow following dam destruction in fall 2018 had been engineered, but a washout nevertheless occurred following a storm in April 2019, carrying considerable sediment further downstream. Although there was significant erosion of the banks, resulting in channel widening and movement of sediment and rock, these changes were transient. The channel became stable within about 6 months, but because natural waterways are dynamic, some changes may continue to occur, especially following heavy rains. However, the major storm in April 2020 caused no significant changes. Overall outcomes: dam removal caused a transient period of sediment movement downstream but not very far, then the channel stabilized. Recovery of vegetation along the banks and of fish and aquatic life in the stream have been documented. Natural recovery is being aided by additional plantings along the banks to enhance stabilization and provide shade, which cools the water and affects the species present. These results, supported by the associated monitoring data, can serve as a model for successful dam removal in the region.

David Hubbard reported on recent Trails Committee activity, in particular their work on the Ballard Trail, and led a discussion on how the committee operates in relation to the Conservation Commission. The other Conservation Commission member currently involved with the Trails Committee is Cody Williams. Others, not Conservation Commission members, who participate in the Trails Committee meetings and activities are considered volunteers. There is some confusion about circumstances when a Trails meeting might be considered an official Conservation Commission meeting, which would require posting a meeting warning and agenda followed by posting of minutes. Herb Durfee has asked the Vermont League of Cities and Towns how this should be handled. To contribute to the effort to clarify the relationship of the Trails group to the Conservation Commission, David made a motion to officially create a Trails Sub-committee with 3 members from the Commission (Craig, Dave and Cody). Craig seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

The proposed Norford Lake Road Conservation Easement Project was discussed briefly, focusing on efforts that have begun for raising the funding that will be needed. Norman Miller has been speaking informally with neighbors of the property to gauge their interest. Bob Linck from the Vermont Land Trust has provided a draft letter to Chris Rimmer, chair of the fund-raising group, to consider sending to

those who might be willing to contribute. A list of potential donors will be developed, with the aim to begin sending letters and making more formal contacts after the elections in August are over.

Lynnwood Andrews gave an update of her work in the Village (Milt Frye) Nature Area to remove invasive plants and replace them with native species. Lynnwood, who serves as a liaison between the town of Norwich and the Conservation Commission's work in the Nature Area, submitted a grant proposal to the Norwich Women's Club. The proposal for \$1000 to cover costs of materials and more plants has been approved. David Hubbard, treasurer, clarified how the grant must be administered. Craig mentioned that he has deer fencing to donate to the restoration project. The new plants in the currently fenced area are doing well despite this summer's dry spells thanks to Pam and Ed Piper hauling water in their pickup truck to the Nature Area and helping carry bucketsful to the plants. Weed-pulling sessions the past two Sundays attracted a few Norwich volunteers. These weekend sessions will continue through the summer, although perhaps on Saturday rather than Sunday, if that might be more convenient for volunteers. Schedules for the sessions will be posted on the Norwich listserv and on the new Norwich Conservation Commission website. Another proposed project for the Nature Area, being coordinated with Lindsay Putnam, is creation of a vernal pool to be used in environmental education programs for MCS students. Craig met with Jim Kennedy, a specialist in wetland management who also serves on the Hanover Conservation Commission, about the best strategies for vernal pool construction. One need identified is for someone with an excavator who might volunteer to dig the hole for the pool. Courtney and Norman had some suggestions of people they will contact about this opportunity. Craig also mentioned that Lindsay had reported new rogue mountain bike trails appearing in the Nature Area. It was agreed that this could be discouraged by blocking those trails with downed trees. Lynnwood asked who has the responsibility for mowing the meadow; Brie noted that it isn't on the current DPW schedule.

Cody Williams gave an update on the Conservation Commission website that he has created. It hasn't been officially launched, but is still considered in progress, pending approval by the Commission. Cheryl asked whether we know what kinds of material should be included on the website, referring to the scope of topics on websites of surrounding towns. It was decided that members should look over what Cody has already included and consider additional materials to recommend at our next meeting in August.

There was a brief discussion of our next Norwich Times article and updating our display in the Post Office. A summary of Jordan's dam removal presentation was considered a possible good topic. Lynnwood and Craig will follow up.

Cheryl moved to approve the June minutes, Lynnwood seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm.  
Minutes compiled by Cheryl Asa