

NORWICH CONSERVATION COMMISSION ZOOM MEETING DRAFT MINUTES: 20 October 2020

Members present: Craig Layne, Cody Williams, Lynnwood Andrews, Cheryl Asa, Chris Rimmer, Courtney Draggiff, Sage McGinley-Smith, and David Hubbard

Guests: Brie Swenson, Peg Merrens

Meeting convened at 7:10PM

Craig provided a copy of the Conservation Commission FY20 budget as a basis for discussing any updates or changes needed for FY21. The main change proposed was to combine "Educational Outreach and Speakers/Workshops" into one budget line and place the contribution NCC makes to LEEEP (Learning about the Environment through Experiential Education Projects) in a separate budget line, while keeping the same total budget request for those activities. The next phase of the Milt Frye Nature Area project will request the same funding as FY20 to focus on removal of non-native trees as well as invasive plants and for planting more native trees.

Craig asked for projects that should be included in the NCC calendar year 2020 Report. Those include Brown Brook bridge construction; Milt Frye Nature Area invasive plant removal and plantings of native flowers, shrubs and tree seedlings; phragmites management in the Ompompanoosuc River and along Beaver Meadow Rd; roadside ash tree counts; progress toward acquisition of the Woody Adams and Arnold properties for the town of Norwich; NCC website launch; Norwich Times articles and Post Office informational displays; as well as assisting with arrangements for the MCS outdoor classrooms to provide a safer learning environment during the pandemic.

Cody, reporting for the Trails subcommittee, mentioned that they have produced a quarterly report and presented their recommendations for addressing handicap parking issues at the entry to the new Brown Brook bridge. After discussion of options, David moved that the NCC support the recommendation of the Trails subcommittee that a line of large natural boulders be used as wheel stops to prevent vehicles from rolling over the edge. Cody seconded and the vote of support was unanimous. In regard to signage to restrict parking to handicap vehicles, it was agreed, in accordance with the Trails subcommittee recommendation, that the matter be decided by the Norwich police and Selectboard. The other Trails subcommittee issue needing resolution was designating authorizing agents who can approve expenditures for trails projects. Cody and David will share that responsibility, to ensure that at least one of them is available as need arises.

Chris gave an update on fundraising efforts for the Arnold Conservation project. A group composed mostly of people living in the vicinity of the property have met via Zoom, along with Bob Linck from the Vermont Land Trust. Gifts and pledges are being received, and additional contacts are being made.

Craig reported that the Boy Scouts are ready to begin construction of the informational kiosk for the Woody Adams Conservation Area, with help from Porter and Son. Craig moved and David seconded the motion that the NCC make \$400 available to the project for purchase of materials as needed. The motion passed unanimously.

The U.S. Dept of Agriculture/Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA/APHIS) has proposed conducting its game camera survey for feral swine in the Woody Adams/Gile Mountain area. It is unlikely there are any feral swine in or around Norwich, but the results would contribute to the

database they are compiling for the New England region. They have also inquired about conducting the survey in the Milt Frye Nature Area, but there are restrictions regarding taking photos that might include children, so that request will likely be denied.

Peg Merrens from Upper Valley Land Trust presented an update on the process of securing the Woody Adams property, which will allow fund-raising to begin. UVLT is producing a prospectus that can be provided to donors. Craig, David and Chris offered to help UVLT identify potential donors who might be interested in contributing.

Brie described an adult education online program she is developing that can engage people in nature when opportunities for outdoor activities are limited. The program would otherwise invite people outside to visit a 6 x 6 ft square of meadow or other habitat and ask participants to try to identify, for example, all plant species in the square. Variations include species of trees, mushrooms, wild edibles, and flowers. Because people can't be invited to cluster at a small space like this during the pandemic, the online program could serve as a virtual substitute. Chris suggested using iNaturalist to confirm IDs. Lynnwood, Craig and Chris offered to work with Brie on the program.

It was agreed that the next Norwich Times article should focus on water conservation, since climate change predicts more periods of drought interspersed with less frequent but heavier rainfall. Courtney will work with Lynnwood on the article.

Courtney mentioned that the September draft minutes have a typo (NNC instead of NCC for Norwich Conservation Commission), which Cheryl will correct. David moved to approve the minutes, and Cody seconded. There were seven votes in favor and one abstention.

The meeting adjourned at 8:33PM
Minutes compiled by Cheryl Asa