

NORWICH CONSERVATION COMMISSION ZOOM MEETING DRAFT MINUTES: 20 April 2021

Members Present: Craig Layne (chair), Lynnwood Andrews, Cheryl Asa, David Hubbard, Normal Miller, Sage McGinley-Smith, Chris Rimmer

Guests: Jeff Lubell, Lily Trajman, Forrest Hammond, Brie Swenson

Meeting convened at 7:03PM

Craig asked for comments from the public. Jeff Lubell, representing the Norwich Affordable Housing sub-committee, asked for input from the Conservation Commission regarding potential locations of affordable housing, such as duplexes and triplexes, that would be consistent with conservation of forests and wildlife habitat. Discussion referred to the strategy recommended in the recent Town Plan to avoid development that would reduce or fragment forest blocks. Limiting development to areas along major roadways, especially closer to town and around the town center, would not only reduce direct impact on forest but also reduce vehicular greenhouse gas emissions resulting from shorter driving distances to most work and shopping destinations. After some sites were suggested that might be suitable, the NCC agreed to create a list of potential sites for further discussion at the May meeting.

Lynnwood presented an update of her work in the Milt Frey Nature Area. She is purchasing native shrubs and trees that will be planted soon, mostly along the stream behind the church, with the help of Lindsay Putnam and her students from the Marion Cross School. Craig, Lynnwood and Lindsay recently walked the upper meadow area to choose a site for the vernal pool that will be constructed. The major cost will be for excavation. Potential grant sources were discussed, including the Association of Vermont Conservation Commission's Tiny Grants program. Since the pool will be used extensively for education of MCS students, pool construction might be included in an application to the State for educational funding.

Craig reported that \$1000 has been raised to pay for willows to be planted along an eroded section of Blood Brook between the American Legion Post and Huntley Meadow. Brie asked if high school students might be hired and mentored for the work. She will follow up with Craig about this possibility.

May 19 is the date set for the webinar on reducing the size of lawns and using electric lawncare equipment, a joint program of the NCC and Norwich Energy Committee. Lynnwood and Chris will explain the conservation benefits, especially when lawn is replaced by more natural plantings that support native wildlife, such as pollinators, butterflies, and birds.

Craig reported that he has received comments from NCC members, the Trails subcommittee, and abutting property owners on the interim management plan for the Woody Adams Conservation Forest. He will send it again to NCC members and to UVLT and the Norwich Town Manager for review. He also reported that construction of an informational kiosk has been completed on the old logging road as it enters the Woody Adams Nature Area.

David reported for the Trails subcommittee. They have applied for a grant to fund new kiosks and signage along Norwich trails and have received funding through the Norwich Historical Society to purchase a bench that will be placed near the Brown Schoolhouse bridge.

Forrest Hammond, bear biologist for the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Dept, described their program for monitoring bears and addressing human/bear conflicts. As the presence of bears is increasing around

towns and more populated areas, incidents are also increasing, since they're attracted to bird feeders, garbage and compost. He is enlisting conservation commissions around the state to help by raising awareness of possible problems with bears and reporting local incidents to the VT FWD. He will send us educational material that can be included in the NCC display case in the Post Office. We will also arrange for him to make a presentation to the community later in the year.

Craig shared a map showing the results of the NCC roadside ash inventory along Turnpike, Union Village and New Boston Roads that he will provide to the Select Board for their discussion of budgeting for mitigation measures.

There was discussion of creating an Instagram account to highlight NCC projects. Instagram is a more appropriate platform for connecting with younger people in the area who might be interested in volunteering or otherwise getting involved in local conservation efforts. Sage showed examples for other local groups and will create the account for NCC.

Craig mentioned that Courtney Dragoff is stepping down, since she is moving away from Norwich. We thank her for her service to the Commission.

Norman moved to accept the March meeting minutes, David seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:56PM.
Minutes compiled by Cheryl Asa