

NORWICH CONSERVATION COMMISSION ZOOM MEETING DRAFT MINUTES: 20 July 2021

Members Present: Craig Layne (chair), Lynnwood Andrews, Cheryl Asa, David Hubbard, Norman Miller, Cody Williams

Guests: Suzanne Leiter, Charlotte Tagupa

Meeting convened at 7:10PM

Craig asked for public comment. Suzanne Leiter shared a recent interaction with the DPW about timing roadside mowing to help control invasive plants. She asked what the NCC is doing to promote control of invasives and what might be done to assist DPW in that effort. After discussion, it was agreed that the NCC should send a message to the Town Manager regarding the importance of this effort and asking how the NCC might help. Norman will also talk to the current head of DPW about the challenges they face in keeping up with mowing to manage invasives. Craig will contact the Regional Planning Commission to see which communities in the region do a good job with invasive plant control.

Lynnwood gave an update on work in the Milt Frey Conservation Area (MFNA). Flags have been placed to delineate the excavation site for the new vernal pool. The Norwich Women's Club has awarded \$600 to the habitat restoration project. Details about weekend workdays are posted weekly in the Norwich listserv, offering volunteer opportunities to the community. Craig reported that he and Brie recently walked the paths in the MFNA that are being considered for ADA compliance, but he isn't sure if there has been further progress.

Chris is writing the article for the next issue of the Norwich Times on bear awareness; Cheri will take the lead on the PO and Library displays. Charlotte says the high school Environmental Club might be interested in co-sponsoring a talk about bears by Forrest Hammond, the Vermont state bear biologist, when it's again possible to have in-person gatherings.

Lynnwood suggested that we have more regular postings on the Norwich listserv, e.g., timing for best dealing with invasive plants.

Cody gave an update on the Trails Committee. The agenda was re-arranged at their recent meeting to prioritize discussion about the US Forest Service proposal regarding unapproved trails that currently cross the Appalachian Trail Corridor as it passes through Norwich. There is conflict between the Forest Service wanting to promote a wilderness experience for hikers on the AT and the number of cross-trails in the section of the AT. Cross-trails that are heavily used or that allow mountain bikes can detract from the wilderness experience of hikers. Also, unless very clearly marked, cross trails can confuse hikers. There is disagreement about which and how many trails should be approved for the Norwich AT section. The Trails Committee has replied to the USFS proposal accordingly (see that memorandum in the Norwich Trails Committee minutes).

The Trails Committee also discussed changing the designation of a segment of the Burton Woods Rd, from Bragg Hill Rd to the crest of the hill, from a Class 4 road to a Trail. Its designation as a Trail would permit improved drainage of the right of way by eliminating damage from motorized traffic. A decision of whether to submit a written proposal to the Selectboard was deferred until the August NTC meeting.

David gave an update on the USDA project to monitor for possible feral pigs in the area. USDA obtained permission from the Fire District to place four cameras along the Beaver Meadow corridor and one along Rt 5. After one month of monitoring during the spring, no feral pigs were detected.

Craig proposed a creation of an NCC Communications Officer and offered to assume that position if someone else would step up to be Chair. It was agreed that such a position would be valuable for better dissemination of information to the community via various platforms, such as the Norwich listserv and the NCC Instagram account and webpages.

David reported on an ongoing discussion by the Fire District Prudential Committee about putting Fire District land (917 acres) into a conservation easement that would be held by UVLT or VLT.

Norman gave a brief update on his effort to establish a Norwich chapter of the Civilian Climate Corps proposed by President Biden.

David motioned to approve the May meeting minutes, Norman seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50PM.

Minutes compiled by Cheryl Asa