

NORWICH CONSERVATION COMMISSION ZOOM MEETING DRAFT MINUTES: 21 December 2021

Members Present: Craig Layne (chair), Lynnwood Andrews (Zoom), Cheryl Asa (Zoom), Suzanne Leiter (Zoom), Norman Miller, Charlotte Tagupa, and Cody Williams (Zoom)

Guests: None

Meeting convened at 7:10PM

Craig asked for any public comments, but no members of the public were present.

David and Craig have drafted a letter, on behalf of the Trails Committee, to the U.S. Forest Service requesting consideration of four modifications to the Forest Service proposal for local trails that would be allowed to cross the Appalachian Trail. The request to retain the Joshua, Griggs Ridge, Five Corners and Dothan Brook Trails included consultation with abutting landowners, local trail users and trail stewards. Craig moved that the NCC approve submission of the letter to the Selectboard, Cody seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Cheryl gave an update of plans for a presentation on vernal pools and how amphibians depend on the pools for breeding. Kevin Tolan, who heads the vernal pool monitoring program for the Vermont Center for Ecostudies, has agreed to give the presentation, and the Norwich Public Library has offered to host the event on their Zoom platform. Kevin also offered lead a guided tour of a local vernal pool. The presentation will likely be scheduled in early March, just ahead of the amphibian migration and breeding season. Lynnwood will write the spring Norwich Times article on vernal pools, to coordinate with the presentation.

Lynnwood gave an update on work in the Milt Frye Nature Area. Volunteers helped with leaf raking to provide organic material for the recently constructed vernal pool, which is necessary to support successful amphibian breeding. More amendments will be needed around the pool, to encourage amphibians to use it. Some larger non-native trees and buckthorn will be removed by volunteers from the Trails Committee, since they have the equipment and experience for such work. Lynnwood has ordered native plants and trees for spring planting.

Craig reported that the management plan for the Woody Adams Conservation Forest has almost been completed and is expected to be signed in January or February.

Lynnwood and Cheryl suggested a community outreach program that might partner with area restaurants on menus that included invasive plants and/or food items that require pollination. This could provide an entertaining way for people to learn more about invasive plants and to appreciate the critical role of pollinators in our food supply. They will work on this for next summer.

Norman gave an update on his questions to the Norwich Dept. of Public Works on their approach to dealing with invasive plants, especially during mowing. At present, the plans are the same as they've been in prior years. Norm also presented a chart produced by the Vermont Woodlands Association that summarizes 32 invasive plants, along with their ecological effects and how to control them. The NCC might be able to use the chart for community outreach or produce a version more specific to the Norwich area. Cody offered to lead a nature walk for the public in the Milt Frye Nature Area to point out remaining invasives there.

Charlotte reported on some activities of the Hanover Highschool Environmental Club, e.g., an inventory of light bulbs in the school with a recommendation for replacement with energy efficient lighting. She also suggested the NCC consider outreach on indigenous thoughts on conservation, such as presented in the book Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants. Since the author is on faculty at SUNY in Syracuse, she might agree to give a presentation or have a Zoom discussion with Charlotte. It was agreed this would be a good outreach activity for fall.

Norman moved to approve the November minutes, Lynnwood seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:17PM.

Minutes compiled by Cheryl Asa