

NORWICH CONSERVATION COMMISSION ZOOM MEETING DRAFT MINUTES: 15 MARCH 2022

Members Present: Craig Layne (chair), Lynnwood Andrews, Cheryl Asa, David Hubbard, Suzanne Leiter, Norman Miller, Chris Rimmer, Charlotte Tagupa, Cody Williams

Guests: None

Meeting convened at 7:05PM

Craig asked for any public comments, but none were present.

Lynnwood gave an update on work at the Milt Frye Nature Area. Fencing will probably be needed to protect new plantings around the vernal pool until they are established. In addition, signage may be important to deter people and their dogs from wading into the pool and disturbing amphibians that might be present. David suggested asking the Town Manager for input, and Cheryl suggested asking Kevin Tolan at Vermont Center for Ecostudies' vernal pool project to help create the signs. Lynnwood is waiting for advice from the Town Manager about recruiting members of the Trails Committee, who are experienced with tree removal, about removing the remaining buckthorn at the edges of the Nature Area.

Dave gave a summary of the last Trails Committee meeting. There was extensive discussion of the new budget process which requires identifying projects at the beginning of each fiscal year that will need town funding. They also discussed possible work at Schmidt Bog that would include collaboration with the NCC. One possible project could focus on an inventory of important plants, in particular, to compare to a survey done in the past, which would show changes over time. Craig mentioned that there is a lot of invasive buckthorn on the site. Projects could also link to MCS conservation education classes.

Craig asked for any updates from other town commissions, committees, boards or departments that might be relevant to the NCC. Suzanne reported that the Select Board has approved purchase of the Woody Adams Conservation Forest and that the Article 36 Task Force has recommended that the Town establish a Green Procurement Policy which would commit to a "high level of fiscal, social, and environmental responsibility in the procurement of energy-related capital improvements" and create a GP Team that would evaluate spending and report on the town carbon footprint. Charlotte also mentioned Article 26 Task Force brainstorming on recommendations to the Select Board. Cheryl reported that the Affordable Housing Sub-Committee is recommending professional evaluation of potential building sites on Town property near the transfer station and on Fire District property along Beaver Meadow Rd.

Cheryl gave an update on scheduling Kevin Tolan's guided visits to an area vernal pool on a Saturday in late April or early May. Craig offered to lead an additional group if there's sufficient interest. Cody will look into options for registration, so participants can be assigned to an additional group if needed. Announcements will be posted on Norwich and Upper Valley listservs and on the NCC website.

Suzanne proposed organizing guided Woods Walks to point out effects of deer populations on forest structure, especially the impact of browsing on forest regeneration. She will look into potential forest sites and foresters or ecologists who could lead the walks.

Craig reported that Brie Swenson is interested in partnering with the NCC about native plantings in Barrett Park.

Craig asked for suggestions about new NCC landscape ecology conservation projects. David suggested looking into Fire District land that might be conserved. Since much of it is adjacent to town forest, e.g.,

Area 5 and the Ballard Trail, that would create larger conserved forest blocks and provide more forest connectivity. Suzanne suggested that we consider putting together coalitions of multiple landowners in sections of town to work together on landscape ecology projects.

Norman proposed identifying non-profit conservation groups in Norwich that might be good partners for NCC projects or education and outreach initiatives. He will begin working on a list of such organizations.

Craig asked about members' interest in working with the Thetford Energy Committee on their three upcoming presentations: Lawn to Meadow, Pollinators, and Forest Carbon Management. It was agreed that the NCC should partner with TEC on these programs.

Craig reminded members of the upcoming joint meeting of area Conservation Commissions being held virtually this year by UVLT.

Norman moved to approve the February 2022 minutes, David seconded, and the motion passed with one abstention.

The meeting adjourned at 8:24PM

Minutes compiled by Cheryl Asa