

Minutes for Norwich Conservation Commission June 16, 2020

Present by Zoom meeting: Craig Layne, Cheryl Asa, Norman Miller, Cody Williams, Sage McGinley-Smith, David Hubbard, Lynnwood Andrews

Public: Paul Manganiello, Tammy Heesakker, Courtney Dragiff, Brie Swensen

Public Comments - Paul Manganiello brought up issue of Japanese Knotweed. Could the town use goats to manage the knotweed? It is hard to see that DPW can keep up. Norman asked if this had been taken up by the CC before. David agreed that it was a tough problem. Cody recalled that Lebanon may have used goats. Courtney said they had used them but that they required a lot of supervision. Norman asked Paul if he would like to research it. David expressed concern about liability and capacity to manage goats by the roadside. Brie looked into this for Huntley Meadow and ran into liability problems. Paul mows his knotweed regularly and has seen a decrease in the knotweed over several years of monthly mowing. Courtney reported that a biological control may be approved soon in NH. She also said that a fall application of herbicide was the only known effective control. Paul is satisfied with the idea that a biological control is in the offing.

Tammy Heesakker asked about Emerald Ash Borer. She has ash trees on her property. Paul stated he had an ash tree cut down on his property last year that he thought was definitely infested with ash borer. Craig noted that the CC had been conducting town-wide inventories of ash trees.

Woody Adams Conservation Forest project - Craig and Peg Merrens walked the property with a member of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB). The VHCB board will meet Thursday. There is now a third option for the grant beyond rejection and acceptance with immediate payment – the grant could pay out slowly. Need a CC committee to draft a comprehensive management plan. Jonathan Frishtick and David Hobson have expressed interest in working on it. Cheryl asked about responsibilities and time line. Craig moved to create contingently a comprehensive management plan subcommittee to include Cheryl, Sage, and Lynnwood from the CC. Passed by unanimous vote. Craig will set up game cameras. Send him an e-mail if interested in joining.

Craig asked if anyone would work with Chris Rimmer on fund-raising. David suggested Norman. Norman agreed to help. Norman asked who subcommittee chair is. Craig thought it did not need to be a formal subcommittee. Peg Merrens will be working with the fund-raising too. Chris, Norman and David will work on fund-raising.

Nancy Arnold Conservation project - VLT asking for \$13,000 from CC toward this project. Craig said that if Woody Adams project does not go forward, we would have the money; otherwise, we could have two fund-raising projects going concurrently. Neighbors of the Nancy Arnold property would be approached first. Mary Sellmann may be willing to assist. The property has good connectivity with other large forested areas. The neighboring properties are not conserved, but properties to the east are. This may be a good seed project for getting adjacent properties interested in conservation.

Cody asked about the finances of the CC. Craig indicated that if Woody Adams project went through, there would be about \$5000 left over in the CC Trust fund. Clearly, the fund would need to be built back up.

David quoted Peter Silberfarb, who worked on fund-raising for the trust fund in the past to the effect that it is easier to fund-raise for specific project than for a general fund. He thinks we can handle both projects.

Chris, Cody, and David will work on the fundraising.

Norman listed the components of a fund-raising effort would be to get some photos and brochures organized. Write a letter. Generate a list of names and make calls. David concurred. Craig will set up a meeting with Bob Linck from VLT, who will work closely with the commission. Cody offered photography services. Norman and Sage have access to drones for aerial photography.

Milt Frye Nature Area - Lynnwood reported on plantings. Need to make a safety plan and file it with Herb Durfee. The drought has caused a major watering headache for the plants put in in March, so that has to come first. Pam and Ed Piper have been helping with that.

Craig has researched more into the tree cutting for the construction of the vernal pool at Milt Frye. Game of Logging graduates will do some felling and clearing of white pines and Norway maples.

Craig and Lindsay uncovered a clay pan layer that might be useful. David reported on what funds might be available for the vernal pool construction. Courtney offered that she knew several places where small grants could be obtained for such a project. Lynnwood will facilitate contact with Jim Kennedy, who has designed vernal pools.

Phragmites - Two bids were sought for Ompompanoosuc and Beaver meadow sites. A three-year program for phragmites control proposed by Land Stewardship, Inc at \$250/year for Ompompanoosuc site. Craig asked Redstart if their proposal was multi-year, but did not get answer yet. If not, then Land Stewardship would be lower bid. For Beaver Meadow site, Redstart was the lower cost proposal. David said there may be some renewed opposition from the landowners at the Beaver Meadow site. Craig will get clarification on the Redstart Ompompanoosuc proposal and check with Beaver Meadow landowners. David will discuss all bids with the Town Manager.

Approval of Minutes - Approval of May minutes motion made by Norman, seconded by David. Passed unanimously.

C. Layne moved (D. Hubbard 2<sup>nd</sup>) the approval of minutes from the April monthly meeting and the three public meetings about the Woody Adams Forest Conservation Project in April and early May, all of which are late in reporting due to some confusion about the nature of recorded meeting records upon switching to Zoom Meetings in April. Approved unanimously. These cured late minutes are attached following the draft minutes of this meeting.

Craig attended an open meeting law seminar addressing issues during the pandemic. We, as a body, cannot have e-mail discussions about topics. We can e-mail about setting up a meeting and dispersing material. Discussions and deliberations have to take place in an open meeting. E-mail discussions among individual commission members can take place so long as a quorum of members is not met.

FY2021 Open Positions and Officers - David nominated himself as Treasurer. Norman nominated Craig as Chair. David also. Lynnwood is willing to be Vice Chair and Milt Frye Coordinator. Craig asked Courtney if she has reapplied for the commission yet. She said she would. Cody will be Trails Liaison. Cheryl agreed to be Secretary. Sage offered to split the task. Craig moved the slate. Norman seconded. Passed unanimously.

Other Business - David reported that Trails Committee has been discussing whether they should continue to be under Conservation Commission, under Recreation Committee or a stand-alone committee. This will be discussed at Huntley Pavilion July 1<sup>st</sup> 7PM. Select Board is asking for more clarity about what Trails Committee does and how it conforms to open meeting law.

Norman would like to hear from the committee about the Tracy Hall project. He will report at the next meeting on the project particulars.

Norman offered to host an outdoor meeting in August.

Minutes compiled by L. Andrews

Norwich Conservation Commission Zoom Meeting Minutes

April 21, 2020

Present: Cheryl Asa, Craig Layne, David Hubbard, Mary Sellmann, Chris Rimmer, Cody Williams, Lynnwood Andrews

Absent: Norman Miller

Guests: Brie Swenson, Peg Merrens

Commenced 7:05 pm

Discussed the Woody Adams Forest Conservation Project, specifically the 'slideshow with public questions and comments' format for the three public meetings and the reasons to wait until grant funding status is known before fundraising the remainder of the matching funds. Concluded that having the grant in-hand would be an invaluable fundraising tool and that it would also be good timing for there to be an article about conservation of contiguous and connected forests in the Norwich Times at the time of fundraising. L. Andrews will write an article. We may also switch the Post Office display in the summer to material about forest conservation.

Discussed the Village Nature Area, specifically the cutting and clearing of disintegrating old pines and Norway maples, perhaps starting in the area of potential vernal pool construction. L. Andrews reported on the plan for and progress of pulling burning bush around the meadow with replacement by planted native shrubs.

February minutes moved for approval by D. Hubbard and seconded by M. Sellmann. Approved unanimously.

Adjourned 8:15 pm

Minutes compiled by C. Layne

Minutes of the Woody Adams Forest Conservation Project, Public Meeting #1

23 April 2020, Zoom Meeting, 6-7 pm

In attendance: Craig Layne, (Conservation Commission), Brie Swenson, Nick Krembs, Pam Smith, Miriam Horowitz, Bill Scavone, Jonathan Frishtick, Linda Cook

Craig Layne introduced himself and described the location of a high conservation value parcel for sale. He further described how the parcel came to the attention of the Conservation Commission, via communications with the forester about the property owned by Tony Adams. The forester believed the 186-acre parcel would be a valuable property to conserve, given its proximity to the Town Forest and the Gile Mountain tract. The Upper Valley Land Trust was then contacted to find out about funding. Tony Adams decided to lower the price to below the conservation appraisal of the property (\$510,000), in order to assist in the viability of a conservation sale. He offered to sell it for \$300,000. A question was posed by J. Frishtick, asking the name of the forester for the Adams parcel. The forester was Ti McLane.

The conservation values of the parcel were described in a slideshow:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ij9oz61t\\_r5a9bgQHi2\\_4Kyc8kyCtWvK/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ij9oz61t_r5a9bgQHi2_4Kyc8kyCtWvK/view?usp=sharing)

And summarized as:

1. Water quality: protects streams, seeps, and vernal pools located in two watersheds;
2. Flood prevention: prevents development in the upper reaches of a watershed that has experienced previous significant downstream flooding;
3. Forest Contiguity: protects a core component of a high priority unfragmented forest block;
4. Wildlife Connectivity: protects an important North-South and East-West wildlife corridor;
5. Wildlife Habitat: reduces fragmentation of natural communities providing habitats for multiple species;
6. Resiliency: protects higher elevation habitats for plants and animals;
7. Climate Change Mitigation: ensures forest carbon sequestration and perpetuates forest carbon storage;
8. Public access: secures the use of existing Blue Ribbon trail and logging road from Town Forest;
9. Recreation: conserves higher-elevation forest offering a back country cross-country ski and snowshoe loop;
10. Sustainable forestry: improves access and targeted forest management capacity on the existing town lands.

The votes required by the Select Board were also described in the slideshow as:

1. To match in-part a \$150K grant from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) that would enable the purchase of this property, the Commission has requested Select Board (SB) approval of the Commission's 01/21/20 vote to use \$130K of the Designated Conservation Fund, comprised of private donations solicited for land conservation, to purchase this land.
2. The commission has also requested SB approval to accept the parcel as town land should the VHCB grant be awarded to the project and all the required matching funds be secured.
3. As a contingency to the grant award from VHCB, the Commission has further requested SB approval to permanently protect all three parcels – the Woody Adams, Town Forest, and Gile Mountain tracts under a single conservation easement conveying development rights to UVLT and VHCB, as co-Grantees.

The Conservation Commission, with the Upper Valley Land Trust, applied to the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board for a land conservation grant of \$150,000. The decision about the grant award will be made in June. The grant requires that the Town put up matching funds and in-kind contributions. These funds would come from the designated Conservation Trust Fund (\$130,000) and the remaining \$20,000 would need to be raised by the Conservation Commission. The in-kind contributions would be conservation easements on Gile Mountain, Town Forest and the Woody Adams Conservation Forest (they are not currently conserved). Development rights easements would be held jointly by the Vt. Housing and Conservation Board and the Upper Valley Land Trust.

M. Horowitz and B. Scavone shared concerns and fears about another town-owned parcel in the area leading to more Turnpike Road traffic comprised of unsafe drivers, irresponsible dog owners, and illegal roadside parkers. C. Layne indicated that no plans exist for trail expansion from Gile to the parcel (The Blue Ribbon trail already crosses the parcel and the unimproved Britton logging road is used by few day hikers). He also reiterated that the project is a forest conservation project, not a recreation project. The landowner has required a sign on the logging road naming the property after his father and further honoring his father with description on that sign of the logging road and backcountry as an area for backcountry skiing and snowshoeing, with no trail improvements. C. Layne indicated that a comprehensive management plan for the project would be written by the Conservation Commission with neighborhood input.

P. Smith asked for a more detailed breakdown of the project financing. The financing and funding sources were re-described for her and a financing slide was added to the slideshow:

\$510K Conservation Appraisal

- \$210K Bargain Sale Donation by Seller

- \$150K VHCB Grant Application

- \$130K Designated Conservation Fund (Private donations given for land conservation)

- \$20K Additional Private Donations Fundraising

P. Smith also asked how neighbor concerns would be addressed. C. Layne answered through neighborhood meetings and public involvement in development of the comprehensive management plan.

L. Cook asked where she could see the slides presented, since she was on the telephone. C. Layne indicated that the link to the Conservation Commission Google Drive File of slideshow would be shared.

Minutes submitted by C. Layne and B. Swenson

Minutes of the Woody Adams Forest Conservation Project, Public Meeting #2

29 April 2020, Zoom Meeting, 6-7 pm

In attendance: Craig Layne, (Conservation Commission), Brie Swenson, Peg Merrens, Nick Krembs, Jonathan Frishtick, Gerry Plummer, Jim Faughnan, Doug Wilberding, Doreen Guillette, Peter Guillette

Craig Layne introduced himself and described the location of a high conservation value parcel for sale. He further described how the parcel came to the attention of the Conservation Commission, via communications with the forester about the property owned by Tony Adams. The forester believed the 186-acre parcel would be a valuable property to conserve, given its proximity to the Town Forest and the Gile Mountain tract. The Upper Valley Land Trust was then contacted to find out about funding. Tony Adams decided to lower the price to below the conservation appraisal of the property (\$510,000), in order to assist in the viability of a conservation sale. He offered to sell it for \$300,000.

The conservation values of the parcel were described in a slideshow:

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And summarized as:

11. Water quality: protects streams, seeps, and vernal pools located in two watersheds;
12. Flood prevention: prevents development in the upper reaches of a watershed that has experienced previous significant downstream flooding;
13. Forest Contiguity: protects a core component of a high priority unfragmented forest block;
14. Wildlife Connectivity: protects an important North-South and East-West wildlife corridor;
15. Wildlife Habitat: reduces fragmentation of natural communities providing habitats for multiple species;
16. Resiliency: protects higher elevation habitats for plants and animals;
17. Climate Change Mitigation: ensures forest carbon sequestration and perpetuates forest carbon storage;
18. Public access: secures the use of existing Blue Ribbon trail and logging road from Town Forest;
19. Recreation: conserves higher-elevation forest offering a back country cross-country ski and snowshoe loop;
20. Sustainable forestry: improves access and targeted forest management capacity on the existing town lands.

The votes required by the Select Board were also described in the slideshow as:

4. To match in-part a \$150K grant from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) that would enable the purchase of this property, the Commission has requested Select Board (SB) approval of the Commission's 01/21/20 vote to use \$130K of the Designated Conservation Fund, comprised of private donations solicited for land conservation, to purchase this land.
5. The commission has also requested SB approval to accept the parcel as town land should the VHCB grant be awarded to the project and all the required matching funds be secured.
6. As a contingency to the grant award from VHCB, the Commission has further requested SB approval to permanently protect all three parcels – the Woody Adams, Town Forest, and Gile Mountain tracts under a single conservation easement conveying development rights to UVLT and VHCB, as co-Grantees

The Conservation Commission, with the Upper Valley Land Trust, applied to the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board for a land conservation grant of \$150,000. The decision about the grant award will be made in June. The grant requires that the Town put up matching funds and in-kind contributions. These funds would come from the designated Conservation Trust Fund (\$130,000) and the remaining \$20,000 would need to be raised by the Conservation Commission. The in-kind contributions would be conservation easements on Gile Mountain, Town Forest and the Woody Adams Conservation Forest (they are not currently conserved). Development rights easements would be held jointly by the Vt. Housing and Conservation Board and the Upper Valley Land Trust.

D. Wilberding asked how much increased recreation would happen in the Turnpike Road neighborhood, how much road traffic the project would cause on Turnpike Road, how expensive of a bridge would be needed for any stream crossing, how wide the town right-of-way is on the road at the Town Forest, why the project was being approached backwards, and what the project would do about gunshots on the Gile ridgeline. P. Merrens reiterated that the project is a forest conservation project, not a recreation project. C. Layne indicated that no plans exist for trail expansion from Gile to the parcel (The Blue Ribbon trail already crosses the parcel and the unimproved Britton logging road is used by some day hikers). C. Layne also indicated that backcountry ski and snowshoe use of the parcel, encouraged by the current owner, would add little traffic; no major bridge work is envisioned; the right-of-way specs would need to be rechecked; no grant funds have yet been acquired and no Select Board votes have been cast; and if there should not be gunshots on the ridgeline, their occurrence would be a law enforcement matter.

J. Faughnan provided a history of the Britton logging road and its uses.

G. Plummer asked if an additionally conserved parcel could be of use in relieving pressure on the Gile trails and parking lot. C. Layne expressed doubts about any such usefulness and concerns about doing anything that could make pressures and impacts worse.

Minutes submitted by C. Layne and B. Swenson

Minutes of the Woody Adams Forest Conservation Project, Public Meeting #3

5 May 2020, Zoom Meeting, 6-7 pm

In attendance: Craig Layne, (Conservation Commission), Brie Swenson, Peg Merrens, Nick Krembs, Liz Russell, David Hubbard

Craig Layne introduced himself and described the location of a high conservation value parcel for sale. He further described how the parcel came to the attention of the Conservation Commission, via communications with the forester about the property owned by Tony Adams. The forester believed the 186-acre parcel would be a valuable property to conserve, given its proximity to the Town Forest and the Gile Mountain tract. The Upper Valley Land Trust was then contacted to find out about funding. Tony Adams decided to lower the price to below the conservation appraisal of the property (\$510,000), in order to assist in the viability of a conservation sale. He offered to sell it for \$300,000.

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And summarized as:

21. Water quality: protects streams, seeps, and vernal pools located in two watersheds;
22. Flood prevention: prevents development in the upper reaches of a watershed that has experienced previous significant downstream flooding;
23. Forest Contiguity: protects a core component of a high priority unfragmented forest block;
24. Wildlife Connectivity: protects an important North-South and East-West wildlife corridor;
25. Wildlife Habitat: reduces fragmentation of natural communities providing habitats for multiple species;
26. Resiliency: protects higher elevation habitats for plants and animals;
27. Climate Change Mitigation: ensures forest carbon sequestration and perpetuates forest carbon storage;
28. Public access: secures the use of existing Blue Ribbon trail and logging road from Town Forest;
29. Recreation: conserves higher-elevation forest offering a back country cross-country ski and snowshoe loop;
30. Sustainable forestry: improves access and targeted forest management capacity on the existing town lands.

The votes required by the Select Board were also described in the slideshow as:

7. To match in-part a \$150K grant from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) that would enable the purchase of this property, the Commission has requested Select Board (SB) approval of the Commission's 01/21/20 vote to use \$130K of the Designated Conservation Fund, comprised of private donations solicited for land conservation, to purchase this land.
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L. Russell commented on what a fantastic forest conservation project it is.

Minutes submitted by C. Layne and B. Swenson