

NORWICH CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING DRAFT MINUTES: 16 April 2024

Members Present: Craig Layne (Chair), Lynnwood Andrews, Cheryl Asa, Alex Gotlieb, Lindsay Putnam, Chris Rimmer, Cody Williams

Guests: None

Meeting convened at 7:10 PM

Additional Agenda items: None

Public Comments: None

UVLT Vernal Pool Event: The event at Brookmead vernal pools has been rescheduled for this Saturday, April 20, 1-3PM. Some NCC board members will attend to assist.

Solar Panel Array Siting: There was a discussion about “deer yard” as a criterion for approval of a solar panel array site. One of the NCC projects is to increase awareness about the browse damage deer can do that slows forest regeneration and encouraging more hunting so help control deer numbers. So it could be counterproductive to be supporting a policy that prevents solar installations in order to conserve deer. However, “deer yard”, in this context, is used to represent a stand of hemlocks. It's the verifiably valuable hemlock stands that are a warranted focus of protection, because they are important habitat for a host of wildlife species besides deer.

Emerald Ash Borer: EAB has been documented on Elm St. in Norwich. Chris talked with the county forester, who put him in touch with the state EAB specialist to find out more about what's planned for managing the infestation. NCC conducted a roadside ash tree inventory more than 5 years ago, which may need updating. Chris offered to take the lead for the NCC to gather more information for developing a plan for NCC to present to the Selectboard. Several towns in the area already have formal plans for managing EAB. Various strategies include tree removal, insecticides, and focus on high-value trees (e.g., large one in front of MCS). There are maps showing EAB infestation in Vermont as well as information and resources on the Vermont Dept of Forests, Parks and Recreation website.

CT River Dams Relicensing: Lynnwood reported that the comment letter she helped write for Norwich to Great River Hydro regarding its relicensing application to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has been submitted.

No Mow May: There was discussion about broadening the message to focus on reducing the size of lawns that have to be mowed, rather than just avoiding mowing in May. Lindsay offered to work on it.

Green Up Day: Lynnwood will check on who is taking responsibility for Norwich arrangements.

Post Office Display: Lindsay will create a display on bat houses to replace the bear safety one currently mounted there.

Milton Frye Nature Area: Lynnwood reported that there is no activity yet in the vernal pool, but it is still a bit early. The tree seedling tube shelters have arrived that will be used to protect new trees that will

be planted. Stakes or poles are still needed to hold the tube shelters in place. Lynnwood moved and Craig seconded a motion to approve the purchase; the motion passed unanimously.

Trails Committee: Cody reported that equipment will be used for the excavation work planned for the Bradley Hills Trail. Details on plans for relocation of the Ballard Trail will be completed when sufficient thawing has occurred. Eagle Scouts will work on replacing the hemlock bridge on the trail up Gile Mountain. A grant proposal is being submitted to the Norwich Women's Club to cover cost of materials to replace the treads on the Gile Mountain fire tower.

Updates from Other Forums, Meetings, and Minutes: Craig reminded members that a program organized by the Hanover Conservation Commission/Biodiversity Committee on "Why Forests are Essential for Us and the Planet" will be held on April 18 2024, 6-7:30 PM via Zoom & in person at the Howe Library Mayer Room, in Hanover. Two other programs are scheduled during May.

Approval of March Minutes: Lynnwood moved and Chris seconded a motion to approve the March draft minutes; the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35PM

Minutes compiled by Cheryl Asa