

APPROVED CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES

December 21, 2020

ZOOM MEETING, 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Stephen Moffatt, Chair; Diane Morgan, Treasurer; June Cook, Secretary; Susie Houston, Select Board Liaison; John Brodhead, Farley Brown, Carol Maroni, Ashley Nunery, Elinor Osborn, Heidi Rich

MINUTES: Minutes of October 19, 2020 were approved.

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS: Susie raised idea of considering conservation easements on town forests and Craftsbury Academy woodlot on Wylie Hill. The Northern Rivers Land Trust is working with towns on placing conservation easements of town property. Towns and school districts may face economic stress and town owned properties could be sold to ease financial burdens. Conservation easements are held in perpetuity which protect the property. Property changing hands doesn't alter the conservation easement.

The future of the CA woodlot is uncertain, particularly if there is a forced school merger. Research is ongoing about putting the woodlot into the CA Trustee ownership. The Trustees are not certain that would protect the CA woodlot from being considered a school asset in any future merger.

Conservation easements require a stewardship fund to be held by the conserving entity. The new Craftsbury Conservation Fund could be a source to satisfy that requirement if town properties were conserved.

Elinor said a new organization, Standing Trees Vermont (?), wants to provide for forests being allowed to return to their original, natural state. Susie explained a conservation easement could include caveats that a percentage of forest remain wild, which is an important element as more and more forest fragmentation occurs.

Possible research: Meet with Forestry Committee. Steve will further that discussion. Susie will continue discussion with CA Trustees.

Diane raised the issue that hopefully enough money would be in the Craftsbury Conservation Fund to also look at other projects if such arise. Susie explained NRLT works in different ways to help with covering the stewardship fees.

WARNING ARTICLE: Elinor moved the Conservation Commission request an appropriation of \$10,000 from the Good Neighbor Fund. The motion failed.

A motion was made to request \$5,000 from the GNF. The motion failed.

A motion was made to request \$7,000 from the GNF which passed with one abstention. The figure was settled as being the same as was received last year.

Questions were raised as to the date an informational meeting will be held prior to the town meeting, which is to be held by Australian ballot. Australian ballot voting precludes any amendments from the floor, and the article request for an appropriation is set.

NATURAL HERITAGE: Farley explained ACT 171 encourages towns and allows municipalities to look at protection of forest blocks and habitat connectors while supporting local forest products industry. Besides providing wildlife habitat, tracts of forests promote biodiversity, filter air and water, protect scenery, promote a working landscape, and sequester carbon. She will explain more in detail at the next commission meeting in January. The town had done mapping previously to identify blocks of forested areas in town that are of ecological and significant scale. A goal is to prevent and minimize forest fragmentation and negatively impacting wildlife corridors. Towns may incorporate this into the Natural Heritage section of town plans. The commission is involved in writing the Natural Heritage section.

PLATE AND MEMORIAL BENCH: A sample plate was shown. Diane explained the term “plaque” vs “plate.” It is a plate that is being placed on the Aldo Leopold memorial bench. Diane reported that although it has already been paid for, the company would make adjustments for free. Consensus was the font should be larger and more emphasis placed on the quote. It was difficult to read, and with future corrosion, would be more so. The plate cost \$43.85, which Diane and Farley have paid. Diane will see if the plate can be elongated and a minimizing of the words “in memory of” and more emphasis on the quote, Steve Wright’s name, and dates.

CRAFTSBURY CONSERVATION FUND: The fund as of November 3, 2019, has \$9,199.63.

KNOTWEED DISPOSAL: Elinor reported holding off until what is happening in Warren is known. Warren is trying a new method of knotweed disposal and making it easy for property owners to bring knotweed invasives to a disposal site.

TOWN MEETING: Three issues: What is written for town report; preparations for the informational meeting; and article for the warning. Everything must be to town auditors by January 15 (Is that confirmed?) Steve will get Article to the Select Board for the Warning. June will write that portion of the report from minutes; Steve will write that portion dealing with the Article requesting an appropriation.

The commission will meet via ZOOM on January 18, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.

Submitted by June Pichel Cook Secretary

