

DRAFT
Town of Waitsfield
Conservation Commission
Meeting Minutes
October 21, 2019

Members Present: Phil Huffman - Chair, Leo Laferriere - Vice Chair, Chris Loomis - Secretary, Bob Cook, Ted Joslin, Spencer Potter, Curt Lindberg. Members Absent: Bruno Grimaldi - Treasurer, Mark Haberle

Also in attendance: Lisa Koitzch - Chair of Fayston Conservation Commission , Caitlin Cusack – Vermont Land Trust Stewardship Forester and Lisa Coyle, Waitsfield resident and neighboring landowner to Scrag Mtn. Town Forest.

1. Huffman opens the meeting at 6:35 and makes the introductions.

Agenda review – Huffman suggests change to item 11 Other business, to include discussion of the next Tri-Town Conservation Commission Meeting.

2. Public Input – None

Lisa Koitzch – joining us to observe and learn about our process of planning on Town Forest lands.

3. Minutes of 9/16/19 meeting.

MOTION by Laferriere, seconded by Potter, to accept the minutes as drafted. MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

4. Scrag Gateway Gateway Parcel management plan development – amendment to Scrag Forest Management Plan.

Discussion with Caitlin Cusack regarding opportunities for collaboration and assistance from the VLT. Cusack notes staff changes at VLT and notes that Adam Piper will be the new main stewardship contact for the Town of Waitsfield. Rebecca Roman is the other new staff member who will be available to the Town and Cusack will remain a point of contact for forestry aspects and management plan approval. Notes that the VLT staff is ready and able to assist with the management plan amendment.

Huffman suggests and Cusack accepts that the new staff be added to the WCC email distribution list. Also suggests they be invited to an upcoming WCC meeting.

Plan amendment content discussion.

Draft Forest Stewardship Plan prepared by County Forester Dan needs final draft edits. Laferriere and Loomis will work with Singleton to complete the draft. Cusack asks to review the draft when it's ready.

Management plan for entire Scrag Mtn. Town Forest will be amended to include the Gateway Parcel lands. This work will be done in-house without the assistance of a hired consultant, but ideally with assistance from the VLT. The VLT is open to this. Need to lay out the tasks ahead and a timeline for completion. Huffman affirms his offer at the

WCC's last meeting to draft a summary of tasks and timeline for review by the Commission.

Huffman notes that the Interim plan for the Gateway parcel has expired, Cusack acknowledges this and replies that the amendment process is underway and thus in compliance with the easement terms.

General process for amendment:

- 1) Prepare draft management plan update
- 2) Re-engage the community at large with public outreach through online survey and public forum during the survey period
- 3) Revise/finalize management plan amendment with consideration of public input and get necessary approvals (VLT, Selectboard)

Loomis asks Cusack to clarify what the VLT can offer for assistance with the plan amendment. Further discussion. Laferriere asks about addressing trail maintenance in the plan and VLT help in getting examples from other towns. Potter suggests the VLT can provide digital images from site visits that can be used in the amendment. Cusack confirms she has images the CC can use, and notes that the VLT will refer the WCC to language used by other towns for similar efforts, reference materials and guides including the UVM "Recreation Trail Planning Toolkit". She offers to help review drafts of the plan, and to see if VLT's new Americorps member may be able to help with drafting.

Discussion around language on P.8 of the current Interim Plan – Topics of Special Management Focus During the Interim Period. Actions noted as near, mid and long-term. These should help to guide the current efforts.

Next Steps:

- 1) Grimaldi, Loomis and Laferriere will work with Singleton to complete final revisions to the Forest Stewardship Plan;
- 2) at 11/18 meeting, develop a project timeline including proposed period for the survey and other public input;
- 3) after the WCC 11/18 meeting, draft a press release for the Valley Reporter to announce the launch of the process and WCC's intent to solicit input through a survey and public forum;
- 4) develop draft plan (need a subcommittee/ working group);
- 5) submit draft plan to VLT for initial review;
- 6) develop survey questions and online survey mechanism – Lindberg offers to help;
- 7) hold public forum to solicit additional input;
- 8) incorporate survey results, input from public forum and any other public input into final plan;
- 9) approve final plan at WCC regular meeting;
- 10) submit to Selectboard for review and approval.

Laferriere: 'What is the Title of the document?'. Suggestion: Amendment to Waitsfield Scrag Mtn. Town Forest Management Plan to incorporate the Gateway Parcel.

5. Other Scrag Forest items:

- 1) Stand 3 harvest potential – Singleton will be meeting with the neighbors on Monti Road and will report back after the meeting.
- 2) Paper map at trailhead – discussion of low elevation trails/ markings/ maintenance/ planning. Agreement to leave the paper trail map as-is for the time-being and consider during trail planning (after the Gateway Parcel management plan amendment is completed) whether to show other low elevation trails on a future map.
- 3) Stewardship/maintenance work needed:
 - Trail maintenance / tree and brush removal: Discussion of tree clearing needs at the parking lot and other locations at low elevations. Agreement to clear the downed trees near the log landing and intersection with Scrag Mtn Trail.
 - Stormwater retention pond management: Agreement on need to address maintenance of the overflow areas needed to prevent erosion and failures.

ACTION – Cook will ask the town road crew to remove the overhanging tree at the Scrag parking lot and add another boulder to block motor vehicles past the parking lot.

ACTION – Joslin will research the subdivision permitting (under previous owner Kisiel) and determine the body that governs the management of the stormwater retention ponds. Ideally a change can be made to the small pond near the concrete bridge to prevent overflowing and erosion that is currently happening.

6) Austin Parcel – Recap of 10/19 Stewardship day

Lindberg reports that approximately 15 people attended, including the ICN employees, Lindberg, Cook and Grimaldi from the WCC, and members of the Mad River Path Association. 80 more trees were planted, prior plantings look very good and well established, knotweed is under control and piles of cut stems are rotting / composting. ICN will provide a final report in writing in December and will attend WCC meeting to discuss in December or January.

7) Wu Ledges –

Cook reports on the Kiosk Project

Posts are in place – 2 at Hastings and 1 at Pine Hill Lane. New sign at Pine Hill is installed. Kiosk signage should be available mid-week, Cook will try to install before 10/25. Loomis cleared brush along the trail easement near the northern kiosk at Hastings Meadow.

Discussion of plowing situation at Hastings. Cook will discuss with Sandy Lawton.

Need one additional yellow sign noting the boundary between private and public land on one of the marked trails.

Cook and Loomis were thanked for their efforts.

8) Proposed Zoning changes –

Lindberg suggests that there should be more discussion between Town committees on subjects such as the recent work to accommodate the “Hamlet” designation and changes from single family to duplex.

Additional action will be discussed at the next Selectboard meeting.

9) Report on 9/28 VT Conservation Commission Summit –

Lindberg suggests the item be tabled till the next meeting

10) Status of funds –

No new expenses approved this meeting

Expenses approved at the last meeting have cleared

Interest accrued

11) Other Business

Next meetings – 11/18/19 and 12/16/19

Tri-town conservation commission meeting – Warren will lead. Grimaldi is the WCC representative helping to organize. George Schenk has kindly offered to host at Lareau Farm Inn. Meeting potentially in January.

12) Record keeping – tabled till next meeting

13) Executive Session - none

14) Lindberg make the motion, seconded by Potter to adjourn. MOTION CARRIES UNANIMOUSLY.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:27 PM

Respectfully Submitted by:

Christopher Loomis
Secretary