

Town of Waitsfield
Conservation Commission
DRAFT Meeting Minutes
July 19, 2021

Members Present: Curt Lindberg - Chair, Leo Laferriere - Vice Chair, Bob Cook, Phil Huffman, James Donaldson, Ted Joslin

Members Absent: Chris Loomis - Secretary, Bruno Grimaldi - Treasurer, Ted Joslin

Public in attendance: P. J. Telep

Lindberg opens the meeting at 6:35 pm

1. Agenda review. Lindberg mentions several modifications to the agenda – less time will be needed on Scrag Trails planning, add action on Sinuosity invoice.
2. Public input – none
3. Review 6/21 meeting minutes – In the absence of the Secretary, action on this item was deferred until the next meeting.
4. Scrag Mountain Town Forest

Trail Planning – Huffman provided an overview of recent work of the Trails Work Group, highlighting a recent site visit to Scrag with Sinuosity trails consultant and Loomis, Cook and Lindberg. As a result of the visit some general agreements were reached on rerouting of two lower main trail segments to bypass some steep ascents and the addition of a lower “walking” loop trail on the Gateway Parcel that includes a short spur to a viewpoint. The Work Group has a follow-up meeting set for July 30 with the consultant to tighten up plans on the lower portion of the forest property and consider routes to the beaver pond area and a potential new route to the saddle. It is the intention to share plans and a map at the August meeting of the Commission.

Discussion followed. Members expressed overall satisfaction with plans for the lower portion of the property, spoke about available funding for trails work, raised the idea of a press release to the community once plans are more developed and explored the anticipated next steps of the trails consultant.

MOTION by Huffman, seconded by Cook, to pay recent Sinuosity invoice in the amount of \$3,795.00 from the Town Stewardship Reserve (Fund 23) and that this fund be repaid from the Scrag Mountain Town Forest Stewardship Reserve (Fund 26) once a CD with Fund 26 funds matures. Huffman noted that he reviewed the invoice and found all in order and noted that it covered work from last fall through June 18, 2021.

MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

5. Scrag Road Ford

Laferriere reported that he spoke with watershed forester Wilcox about a ford for this location instead of a culvert. Cook reported on some research he did on ford design and noted that a next step is for Cook, Laferriere and he to develop a plan.

6. Discussion with potential new Commission member P.J. Telep

Telep spoke of his interest in conservation issues in the Mad River Valley and asked about how collaboration happens with neighboring Conservation Commissions, how conservation opportunities come to the Commission and the time commitment involved in Commission membership. These topics were explored. The role of the Tri-Town Conservation Commission was noted as was the recent collaborative work with the Waitsfield Planning Commission on Act 171 compliance. It was also observed that much of the Commission's work is accomplished by working groups comprised of interested members and devoted to specific issues, such as the Austin Parcel floodplain restoration.

MOTION by Laferriere, seconded by Huffman, to recommend to the Selectboard the appointment of P. J. Telep to membership on the Conservation Commission.

MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY. Lindberg stated we would work with the Town Administrator to get this motion on the Selectboard's meeting agenda.

7. Update on Tri-Town collaborative effort on trail planning and wildlife

Lindberg reported that the Warren Conservation Commission held a discussion at its July meeting with representatives of the Trails Collaborative about the plans for an expanded trail network and the need for careful consideration of the impact on wildlife. The Trails Collaborative also made a short presentation at the recent Waitsfield Selectboard meeting. The desire of the collaborative to involve the community in the trails planning work was discussed as was the opportunity to involve the Conservation Commissions from the three towns in this effort. One outcome of these various discussions was an invitation for representatives from the three Commissions to attend Collaborative's next meeting, tentatively scheduled for September 22 from 4:00 to 5:30 pm. Donaldson and Huffman volunteered to join Cook and Lindberg as Commission representatives in this effort.

8. Plan for Commission files – online platform and organization

It was observed that there is a need for a more complete and better organized set of Commission documents and reports held on the town website as well as the creation of an online site where in-process commission plans and documents can be shared and easily accessed. Lindberg noted that he discussed these issues with the Town Administrator and she agreed with these needs and offered to provide support. As part of this effort it was noted by several Commission members that some paper records should probably be scanned for online storage and access. James Donaldson volunteered to dig into this issue and be in touch with the Town Administrator and take a look through the town paper records as first steps.

9. Update on Lot 42 on Scrag – the Covell court matter

Laferriere provided an update on the latest developments related to Lot 42 and provided some historical context. We are awaiting instructions from the judge on next steps, and whether we will need to contact the Covell heirs who have been identified in our search.

10. Member roundtable

Lindberg noted that he would like to periodically provide time on meeting agendas for members to raise ideas, questions and concerns. Laferriere asked if anyone had seen or completed the AVCC town forest governance survey. Huffman offered to share the survey with Lindberg, who will handle completion. Cook noted that some chain saw work is needed on a downed tree on one of the lower trails at Scrag. He will contact Loomis on how best to tackle this. Lindberg reminded members of the upcoming Doug Tallamy talk at Flatbread and offered to circulate an invitation to everyone.

11. Other business

WCC next scheduled meetings 8/16 and 9/20 at 6:30. Several members will be unable to attend the 8/16 meeting, so an alternative date of 8/23 was agreed upon, pending availability of space in town hall.

12. Executive session

MOTION – by Cook, seconded by Huffman, to go into executive session to discuss two real estate matters.

MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

WCC goes into executive session at 8:15 PM

MOTION BY Cook, seconded by Laferriere to come out of Executive session. MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

Commission comes out of Executive Session at 8:40 PM with no action taken.

Cook makes a motion to adjourn, seconded by Donaldson.

MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

Meeting adjourned at 8:40 PM.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Curt Lindberg - Chair