

CONSERVATION & TRAILS COMMITTEE (CTC)
Essex Town Offices, 81 Main St., Essex Junction, Vermont 05452

Draft minutes Tuesday 2/1/2022

Members Attending: Alan Botula Chair, Shannon Jackson, Betsy Dunn Clerk. Rusty Brink, Erin De Vries, Ken Signorello, Steve Dowd

Members absent: Lauren Gaffney Cohen, Mike Spaeder Vice Chair

Staff Present: Darren Schibler

Members of the public attending: Mary Post, Patty Davis and Sharon Zukowski

Meeting called to order by Alan Botula at 6:36pm

Agenda Item 1. Public to be heard

Mary post spoke about dogs running free at Indian Brook reservoir. She believes that many people are afraid of dogs and when they are running free, not at their owner's side that are a danger. Some dogs are a danger to other dogs when the other dog is on leash as well. She'd like to have all dogs on leash. She also asked if it would be a good idea to possibly close the park so that an ecological study of the health of the park could be done. And see what is needed to foster its health.

Patty Davis spoke to say to congratulations to the new members. She identified herself as a master gardener She would like to see buffers, and conservation easements (strips) with native VT plants and flowers. She has a list she will make available to the committee. She also is opposed to dogs being off leash at any of our parks She encourages us to speak with the chief of Police about this issue.

Sharon Zukowski She also would like dogs on leash. She hopes by doing this their excrement will be bagged and picked up. When off leash the owner doesn't even know that they did poop!

The committee discussed this issue at length. We have had complaints about this before. The last time it was referred to Ally Vile at Parks and Recreation. We will need an ordinance to deal with the problem. Ken asked if there was a penalty for a violation. Enforcement might be the problem. Possible we could use the Unsworth property in town for a dog park so they can run free. Darren indicated that we would need a public forum to start the process off. Betsy made a motion to have a public hearing and rope in Parks and Recreation. Ken seconded the motion. It passed 6-0-1 (Shannon abstained, having entered the discussion partway through). Discussion about the forum at the March meeting to include Chief Hoague and Ally Vile

Agenda Item 2. Agenda

No changes to the agenda were made. Ken asked if it made sense that the agenda item should be the first of our issues before the public to be heard.

Agenda Item 3. New member introductions

All three new members were present and area happy to join the committee. Ken said he was very interested in forestry and invasive species. Steve is focused on the trails. And Erin as a watershed ecologist is all about water quality and the protection of our waterways.

Agenda Item 4. Minutes

No corrections to the minutes were made Shannon moves to accept the minutes as written, Steve seconds the motion and it passed 6-0-1 (Erin abstained).

Agenda Item 5. Spring Clean up

Alan explained to the committee that the committee focuses on invasive species in the spring and trails in the fall. Darren reminded us that the protocol is in the google drive and the to do list. The work is typically done in May. May 6th is Arbor Day and we do have a plan for that so a date latter in the month is better May 21st will be clean-up day. Rain date will be the 28th The committee will focus on Indian Brook. The fellowship of the Wheel cleans up Saxon Hill. The primary invasive is the Buckthorn and honeysuckle. Betsy suggested that we invite Ethan Tapper to come and speak to the committee about the use of Buckthorn Blaster, a treatment for the invasives. Betsy will reach out to Ethan Tapper Alan asked Shannon to put together a timeline. He will work with Erin and Steve. Erin reminded us that September is VT waters clean up

Agenda Item 6. Adopt-A-Tree

The RFP went out 1/31/22 for the removal of the trees. They were all marked by Alan, Shannon, and Betsy. Chuck Vile was there and explained what about each tree was the reason for its removal. They will be removed the first of March There will be 13-15 trees treated for the EAB. Darren and Chuck worked on a list of trees that could be planted, using the VT UCF web site. They plan on making this list that shows the tolerance of trees to salt and the space required for its growth in the green belt as a permanent part of the google drive. The new trees will be planted in the Fall. We have picked that replacement trees and by waiting until the fall we will have more nursery stock to pick from. Darren informed the team that we got the \$5,000 grant for Caring for the Canopy from VT Urban Community Forests

Betsy spoke with Caitlyn at the Essex Free Library, and she will be glad to host the painting of the rocks for identifying who is caring for each tree. Making it an event. Ken said he'd take pictures at the event and when they are planting the trees. Steve suggested that a sign for industries or groups caring for the individual tress might be better. He will look into that.

The team wanted a digital link for caring for each individual specie of tree planted. Betsy found a link in the VTUCF web site. Erin thought that there might be another resource available Her husband is a landscaper, and he might be aware of one. She will check. The Adopter's agreement is a bit long Ken will investigate how it can be made more concise.

Agenda Item 7. Trail Mapping

This is a part of the work list for the team and Shannon, Laurie, and Betsy signed up for this item. We have a major obstacle for moving forward with this. Parks and Recreation has a very low capacity for any increase in their workload. Ken asked why we can't produce these maps. Steve pointed out that many of these are already in All Trails. Betsy said yes, but we want them on our web site as well. Erin had indicated that the Grad students at UVM can map but need supervision. The conversation segued to mapping vs marking. Ken is going to try to do a mapping and bring his results at the next meeting. Darren will touch base with Shannon at the town offices (who is in charge of the Town's web site) what we need to have for maps to get on the site.

Steve would like to have maps at the trail heads of our forests to facilitate the use of the trails. Keep the laminated maps in boxes at the trail head and potentially at the junctions when the trails split off. This is Trail Promotion/marketing. Shannon, Lauren. Steve and Betsy will work on this

Agenda Item 8. Work Plan

We looked at the work plan document. First we would prioritize the items. Then we could split up outside of the meeting to work on items in the plan. And by keeping it to only 4 people in each group, we don't violate the town meeting law because it's not a quorum. The group would work within a time frame and come back to the meeting to give a succinct report on the item. Erin suggested we put them in to categories. She and Alan will work on that.

Agenda Item 9. Other Items

1. Ashwood reutilization: Shannon and Lauren suggested we use the ash wood we remove for art projects initially as pilot program, but work on setting up a community firewood program next year, working with VT's heating assistance program. There are issues with that that must be dealt with first. The artist community would love to have to the wood. Shannon would love this to become a Pilot program for 2022. A list of action plans was presented by Shannon. Betsy also asked if we could make benches for the parks. The "Bench Guy" would make them for free. Shannon is aware of him and will reach out to him
2. Development review: there are two to review. 44 Brigham Hill Lane (a 3-lot subdivision under final review), and 247 River Road (a conceptual plan for a 2-lot subdivision / planned unit development with existing homes). Several CTC members had inquired about a request to the Planning Commission by Allen Brook Development change to the zoning in the Resource Preservation District – Industrial (encompassing Saxon Hill) to allow for additional industrial uses within the areas designated for development (not the conservation / buffer areas). Some members of the community were concerned that this would conflict with the purpose of the district; the Planning Commission has yet to review the request in detail.
3. Lauren reported off to Darren she has researched the commission issue, but more information is needed.

4. The tree policy must be approved at our next meeting and sent to the Selectboard for approval.
5. Betsy is compiling a list of resources for the committee that will stay on the google drive for everyone's enjoyment
6. Bee The Change sent a letter regarding the "Our Town Pollinator Project" There are some places we can do this this will be added to the March agenda.

Alan accepted Rusty's motion to adjourn, Ken seconded it at 8:41 it passed 7-0.