

CONSERVATION & TRAILS COMMITTEE
Minutes for Tuesday, July 13, 2021, 6:30 p.m.
Essex Town Offices, 81 Main St., Essex Junction, Vermont 05452

In Attendance: Diana Wood (Clerk/Secretary), Casey Clark, Alan Botula (Vice Chair), Mike Spaeder. With guest Chuck Vile and Darren Schibler (Town Planner)

Botula called the meeting to order at 6:35pm

1. Election of Officers

Botula is currently Vice Chair and leading the meeting. Spaeder nominated Botula to become Chair, Wood Seconds. All in favor.

To fill the vacancy of Vice Chair, Wood nominated Spader. Botula made the motion. All in favor.

Wood announced her departure and this meeting would be her last. The clerk/secretary vacancy will be addressed at next month's meeting

2. Public Comments

There were no comments

3. Agenda Changes and Approval

No changes. The meeting will proceed as written

Next month the trail mapping progress can be reviewed

4. Minutes

Botula makes motion to accept and approve, Wood seconds. All were in favor.

5. Ash Tree Re-Inventory

Botula asks about the progress of the intern. Schibler explains that never came to fruition. The project will need to rely on town volunteers. Schibler highlighted the ash trees on the ANR website. There's only about 200 and most are clustered in neighborhoods. Botula asks if the team should be looking for specimens to treat against the ash borer. Schibler

says yes this is a good opportunity to review which trees are in good shape. The town should be able to treat half the trees one year, and the other the following year and then alternate going forward. Botula asks about numbers of trees. Schibler notes that 160 trees is an appropriate number based on the percentage of that species within out total tree canopy, but the actual number treated will depend on available funding. Also during the re-inventory the team should identify which trees should be replaced.

Spaeder ask about how the volunteers will be properly trained to assess trees. Schibler comments that Chuck Vile can lead a brief workshop or work with people one on one. Vile agrees to help. Vile suggest that volunteers should work in pairs. Botula would welcome Vile on all of the inventory missions. Vile is available most weekends.

Spaeder asks about the program/collector app. Schibler will share the link to download it and provide additional information. He notes that it will use your cell phone data.

Botula ask how the trainings should work. Spaeder suggests the collector app and tree identifying can happen simultaneously. Vile comments that going to a neighborhood like Saybrook would a good place to start. They'll meet on Sunday at 1pm at the end of the road.

6. Tree Care Ordinance – Draft

The committee reviewed the updated draft ordinance. There were minor language changes, and a note that the Committee will need to update the charter to reflect responsibilities listed in the Tree Ordinance.

Wood makes motion to accept this draft and send it to other Town departments and legal team for review. Spader seconds. All were in favor.

The Committee stated the goal of adopting it by the end of the year.

7. Work Plan & Calendar Review

Schibler notes that this a good time to review the work plan to prioritize projects to get any financial requests in to the town for budget review and approval in October.

Vile comments that offering trail maintenance workshops and training would a good project to add. Spaeder follows that he would welcome that since he is the main caretaker of the trails. Schibler adds that it would a good way to reach more people. Spaeder asks if there is a list of people. Schibler says that he has a list from Parks & Rec, and we can coordinate with them to revive it. It was discussed that Fall foliage season might be a good time for it because people are more interested in being in the woods at that time.

Schibler comments the fall clean up event at Indian Brook had historically been a trails maintenance day. Spaeder agrees that the fall event would be better suited for trails. Wood and Clark agree it would be best use of the Committees efforts.

The Committee will review again when all members are present, and the group gets more members.

Clark comments that she would be interested in leading the Adopt-A-Tree program. Botula will share his earlier presentation with Clark, and together they can work to finalize the plan within the next 4 weeks.

Botula comments on the Ash Replacement item on the work plan. The re-inventory is a task under that, and added the plan development for treatment.

Tree City USA grant needs to be closed out. Schibler adds that they requested a plaque for the tree that was planted at the school this year, but that will be addressed again when the teachers are back from summer break.

Spaeder asks if a new item for buckthorn management should be added to the work plan. Schibler add that it part of the Indian Brook forest management plan, but Mathieu Town forest doesn't have a plan yet. The country forester can be contacted to address the large buckthorn. Schibler added it as its own item, in case additional funding is needed for the project.

Spaeder comments the partnering with the Parks & Rec team is important and building a good working relationship. Schibler notes that when the committees were separate, Parks oversaw the Trails part, since the consolidations. Wood suggests that Parks should have a standing seat on the Committee. Schibler will bring that idea to the Selectboard.

8. **Development Review**

A few items we touched on briefly.

Brigham Hill Lane parcel adjustment. No development plan for the site.

Pinewood Section I plan was reviewed. Schibler shared the plan was rejected as it was presented due to too many small homes being built on very steep slopes.

More items will be presented next month

9. **Reading File**

Possible opportunities to partner with the PLACE Program from UVM

Our Town Pollinator Program. Botula asks if we have locations that would be suitable for it. Schibler pulled up the map and some were identified. Botula is very interested in this. The Committee will look into this more.

Tree Equity article. Vile also shared articles about public space and equity.

Spader makes motion to adorn. Botula seconds. All in were favor.

Meeting end at 8:07pm.

Minutes submitted by Diana Wood, Clerk.

Minutes approved October 20, 2021.