

Stowe Conservation Commission
Wednesday, January 15, 2020
Akeley Memorial Building
Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Robyn Anderson, Andre Blais, Catherine Drake, Bob Johnson, Christine Dorsey McGowan, Darsey Moon, Robert Moore Town: Tom Jackman

Guest: Charlie Lusk

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m.

Minutes, Reports and Updates

The minutes of the December 4, 2019 meeting were approved unanimously on a motion by Ms. Moon, seconded by Ms. McGowan.

Ms. Drake reported that she has discussed the idea of an Arbor Day event with Elisabeth Fenn of Stowe Land Trust and they are interested in collaborating. She will be meeting with Elizabeth on Monday and invited anyone on the Commission to be involved.

Conservationist of the Year

Mr. Jackman asked if anyone had suggestions for the “Conservationist of the Year” award to be presented at Town Meeting day. Ms. Drake suggested that the Shutesville Hill Wildlife Corridor Partnership be commended for their work on community outreach and completing 5 land protection projects.

Mr. Blais suggested the Alchemist is also worthy of commendation for their continued effort in maintaining high environmental standards in their business. Commission members will make the final decision at a future meeting.

Emerald Ash Borer Management

Mr. Jackman and Mr. Moore clarified that \$11,000 in the Stowe Town Budget will be used for assessment and inventory of Ash Trees throughout Stowe. Mr. Jackman will discuss the project with forester Alan Thompson.

Mr. Lusk was present to discuss pending legislation related to the Shade Tree Commission statute and removing trees from public land. Amendments are being proposed to the original statute in the State Legislature. Some of the amendments change language and remove the “shade” distinction and other amendments make changes to the jurisdiction on right of ways. A concern was expressed that the amendment may make it difficult or impossible to be proactive in removing ash trees.

Mr. Lusk will keep the Commission up to date on the movement of the legislation and expressed hope that the legislation considers health and safety issues as it moves through the process. The proposed language will be provided to Commission members.

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Mayo Farm Agricultural Lease

The lease on Mayo Farm expired as of December 31, 2019 and an RFP will be released to consider farming proposals for the next term. Discussion ensued on the rent, riparian buffer, haying activities, and municipal sludge application. Mr. Jackman will ask the Town Manager to consider removing section 8 regarding municipal sludge since it is no longer relevant. It was clarified that more than one farmer could be granted a portion of the property and that proposals do not have to be for the entire 125 acres.

Several other issues were discussed that pertain to the future expiration of the easement in 2026.

Town of Stowe Annual Report

Ms. Drake suggested the inclusion of a paragraph discussing our participation in the Shutesville Hill Wildlife Management Corridor project highlighting the co-sponsoring of the lecture series and participating on the Partnership Committee.

The meeting adjourned at 6:25 pm. The next meeting will be held on February 5th, 2020.

Respectfully submitted by Catherine Drake

Stowe Conservation Commission
Wednesday, February 19, 2020
Akeley Memorial Building
Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Robyn Anderson, Andre Blais, Catherine Drake, Bob Johnson, Christine Dorsey McGowan, Robert Moore Members Absent: Darsey Moon
Town: Tom Jackman

Guests: Bobby Roberts

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m.

Paws of Honor

Bobby Roberts was present to discuss a proposal to erect a sign on the Quiet Path to honor pets, particularly Stowe dogs who have passed away.

He said that several Stowe residents have used the path for walking their dogs for many years and as the dogs are now passing away it would serve as a memorial. Location proposed is the area where the cemetery and river meet. They are proposing a price of \$500 for a plaque - \$250 to go to NCAL and \$250 to the town. They could consider a program to volunteer time to clean up poop in lieu of payment. NCAL could administer the project but has not yet been approached about the idea. He wanted to get town input and approval first.

They would advertise and do news articles about the project. Commission members expressed interest in tying the project to the poop problem on the rec path. A pledge could be incorporated into the project to keep the path clean. Ms. McGowan suggested that a standing ad in the paper remind people about the cleaning up could be part of how the funds were used by the town.

Commitments to the project from NCAL, location and signage need to be refined. Mr. Jackman suggested that the location be closer to the parking lot, but Mr. Roberts said that he thought it best to be where most might see it coming from all directions. Mr. Jackman asked about the text of the plaque and Mr. Roberts said name and dates perhaps - the plaques would be about 2”.

Minutes, Reports and Updates

The minutes of the January 15, 2020 meeting were approved on a motion by Ms. McGowan and seconded by Ms. Andersen with a change to correct “Shade Tree Commission” and replace with “Tree Warden Commission.”

Mr. Jackman reported there was only one proposal for leasing Mayo Farm and came from the existing leaseholder. The Select Board is expected to approve the 5-year lease at its next meeting.

Ms. Drake reported that she met with Elisabeth Fenn to brainstorm ideas about collaborating on an Arbor Day event. They are proposing to conduct a Big Tree Contest. She outlined the contest rules and asked that the Commission consider budgeting about \$500 for the expenses associated with program. Prizes were discussed and agreed that they would be forest related, but appropriate for children. Ideas included, disease resistant elm trees, stuffed native birds that sing, chocolate or wood product. All agreed that the program should move forward and Mr. Jackman asked that the expenses be directly billed through him.

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Mr. Blais reported that a very large elm was taken down on Mountain Road that had been dead for several years.

Conservationist of the Year

The award to Shutesville Hill Wildlife Partnership was passed around. Christine and Rob will be in attendance to present the award to the attending partners at Town Meeting on March 3rd.

Emerald Ash Borer Management

Mr. Jackman presented a draft scope of work on the Ash Tree Inventory project. He explained the idea to prioritize those trees within the Municipal Roads General Permit.

Ms. Gowan said that a startup company, White Out Solutions has a program that uses drones to identify trees and might be cost-effective. Mr. Jackman took note of the company.

The meeting adjourned at 6:20 pm. The next meeting will be held on March 4th, 2020.

Respectfully submitted by Catherine Drake

Stowe Conservation Commission
Wednesday, May 6, 2020
Zoom Conference
Meeting Minutes

Members Present on Zoom Conference: Andre Blais, Catherine Drake, Bob Johnson, Christine Dorsey McGowan, Darsey Moon, Robert Moore Town: Tom Jackman

The meeting was called to order at 5:03 p.m.

Minutes, Reports and Updates

Commission members discussed the status of ongoing town activities during the Covid-19 pandemic. Mr. Jackman said that town properties are open, including Cady Hill and information to encourage proper use will be posted. Mr. Jackman said that road construction projects on Route 100 have commenced and will include work on Stagecoach Road.

Moscow Volleyball Courts

A motion was made by Ms. Moon and seconded by Ms. McGowan to authorize the funding from the Conservation Commission budget for an additional Moscow Recreational Field volleyball court and passed unanimously.

Green Up Day

The Commission agreed to the following procedures to sponsor Green Up Day on May 30, 2020 incorporating social distancing protocols:

Ms. Drake will set up a tent and table in the back parking lot of the Sunset Grille at 7:30 a.m. Mr. Jackman will come at 7:30 and bring the bags, gloves, and hand sanitizer for participants. No map or sign in sheet will be provided. Signage will provide details on instructions: take bag, go wherever you like, return bags to area indicated at the Sunset Grille (do NOT leave bags along roadside), and to social distance. Mr. Jackman will make large signs indicating where to leave bags and “stay 6 feet back” and wait your turn when picking up bags. Commission members may choose to stay on site, perhaps staying in their cars for any questions. Ms. Drake will stay from 7:30 until 9 am and take the tent down at 1:00 pm. Members said they would come by and monitor the event during the morning. The highway department will pick up the bags as per previous years in the early afternoon.

Mr. Jackman will post the information on Front Porch Forum. Mr. Jackman will suggest that school groups pick up areas that they have done in the past. He will also mention to be in contact if students would like volunteer hours to be signed on off. Mr. Moore suggested that members also build momentum for the event through posts on FPF.

Mr. Jackman will put an ad in the Stowe reporter.

Other Updates

Mr. Jackman is working with David Jacqua to update the Recreation Guide.

Ms. Drake reported they have had several entries for the Big Tree contest which has been extended until May 15th. Prizes will be awarded and will be funded through the CC budget.

The meeting adjourned at 5:55 pm. The next meeting will be held on May 20, 2020 via zoom.

Respectfully submitted by Catherine Drake

Stowe Conservation Commission
Wednesday, May 20, 2020
Zoom Conference
Meeting Minutes

Members Present on Zoom Conference: Andre Blais, Bob Johnson, Christine Dorsey McGowan, Darsey Moon, Robert Moore. Absent: Catherine Drake. Town: Tom Jackman

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m.

Minutes, Reports and Updates

The minutes of the May 6 meeting were approved on a motion by Ms. Moon, seconded by Mr. Johnson.

Mr. Moore gave an update on the pilot project that UVM is doing on the steep section of Maple Run Lane in conjunction with the Municipal Roads General Permit. They will monitor 2 sites, one which will have drainage improvements constructed and the other left as is to try to determine if the improvements have a positive impact.

The Commission agreed that it was too late in the season to try to accomplish much more on the work plan, given the limitations on activity during this period of COVID restrictions. Mr. Jackman indicated that town staff has been asked to spend as little of their budget as possible.

Green Up Day

Mr. Jackman and Ms. Drake will setup starting at 7:30. Ms. Moon, Ms. McGowan and Mr. Moore indicated that they will come by at some point. Mr. Moore will swing by in the late afternoon to make sure all the bags have been picked up.

The meeting adjourned at 5:55 pm. The next meeting will be a Sunset Rock site visit and a visit to the reservoir property to check on possible illegal trail activity.

Respectfully submitted by Tom Jackman

Stowe Conservation Commission
Wednesday, August 19, 2020
Zoom Conference
Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Andre Blais, Catherine Drake, Bob Johnson, Christine Dorsey McGowan, Darsey Moon, Robert Moore Town: Tom Jackman

Guests: Brenna Galdenzi, Catherine Gott, Melissa Mielens, Alan Thompson

The meeting was called to order at 5:06 p.m. via Zoom

Living in Bear Country

Members of the public were present and introduced themselves. Tom Jackman stated that we will be working on a program to address Living with Bears in Stowe and asked the guests for their input. Ms. Galdenzi said that the town could have an educational program as well as adopt bylaws and ordinances regarding feeding bears directly or indirectly through bird feeders, dog food, garbage and compost. She suggested that hot spots could be identified, and investments made in those area. Her organization would be willing to do a fund raiser for garbage containers that are bear proof

Ms. Mielens added that it's an ongoing problem and that cubs are being taught how to dine in dumpsters and that will continue. She suggested that the town could do more public awareness and a public education campaign.

Ms. Galdenzi said because of out of town visitors more than education is needed. She also said that planting skunk cabbage as bear food source could be considered.

Discussion ensued and Mr. Moore said that education and outreach is a great first step and the town could work with Fish and Wildlife, Stowe Land Trust and others. The Shutesville Hill Wildlife Corridor allows bears and other wildlife to traverse large tracks of land and Stowe is in a key location to help keep bears healthy by supporting the protection of this corridor.

Ms. Drake suggested that an initiative in spring could include a banner over the street, rec path receptacles with educational signs and considering collaborating with the Green Up Day program in May.

Other points made were that the rec path gets visitors and signage there could be very effective. All members agreed that we should not come down too heavy until after a public outreach and education effort was made and that bear proof containers can be expensive and vary in terms of effectiveness. The Commission agreed to take on this effort in the months to come.

ROW Ash Tree Inventory

Allan Thompson was present to report on the ROW Ash Tree Inventory and the status of his work. The emerald ash borer is very close to Stowe and ash tree mortality is guaranteed in the area. He reminded the Commission that clearing a fallen dead tree is more expensive to deal with than taking down a live tree. Proactive work would be cheaper in the long run and he said that there are some grants available through the. Urban Community Forestry program.

Mr. Thompson said that the inventory commenced in March and they drove and walked Stowe town roads and identified trees greater than six inches located 25' from centerline. They marked about 2,300 trees and kept a GPS file. They noted which trees were high

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priority based on how they or their limbs could fall into the road. He said that 160 trees cost \$13,500 to remove in Montpelier, which was an exceptionally low bid.

Members discussed the merits of doing a pilot tree removal project along a road in Stowe. Mr. Jackman said that all capital projects are on hold due to budget constraints. Mr. Lusk will need to weigh in on the project and the town would need to apply for a grant. The Commission agreed Mr. Jackman should identify an appropriate pilot project on a well-travelled stretch of road with few property owners and many ash trees.

Mr. Thompson suggested we do outreach to explain the painted trees and the need to remove.

The meeting adjourned at 6:40 pm. The next meeting will be held on September 3, 2020.

Respectfully submitted by Catherine Drake

Stowe Conservation Commission
Wednesday, September 2, 2020
Thomspon Park
Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Andre Blais, Catherine Drake, Bob Johnson, Christine Dorsey McGowan, Darsey Moon, Robert Moore, Alison Schoenbeck Town: Tom Jackman

Guests: Charlie Lusk

The meeting was called to order at 5:06 p.m.

Living in Bear Country

Discussion continued regarding bears in the community and the Commission spending a portion of their budget to purchase two bear proof trash/recycling containers at a cost of \$4,000. The specific containers will be selected by the public works department and others to be purchased by the Recreation Department. A motion was made by Ms. Drake and seconded by Mr. Johnson to purchase the containers and also provide information near the containers about the bear issue. Mr. Blais voted no and all other members voted yes and motion was approved.

Other efforts will continue in the spring to educate the public through newspaper articles, front porch forum and a banner above Main Street.

ROW Ash Tree Inventory

Mr. Jackman presented the map showing the Ash trees along the ROW prepared by Allan Thompson. Discussion ensued about which section of road would be best for a pilot program utilizing a grant through the Urban Community Forestry program as discussed at the last meeting. Issues covered included the class of the road, working with landowners, the pending statutory changes making their way through the legislature (H673), number of trees and bidding the project.

After much debate and with input from Mr. Lusk, all agreed the preferred stretch of road would be on West Hill Road/Tamarack Road. Mr. Jackman agreed to work on the grant and further investigate items discussed. He will also contact Stowe Electric to discuss their methodology.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 pm. The next meeting will be held on September 16, 2020.

Respectfully submitted by Catherine Drake

Stowe Conservation Commission
Wednesday, September 16, 2020
Thompson Park
Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Andre Blais, Catherine Drake, Bob Johnson, Christine Dorsey McGowan, Robert Moore, Alison Schoenbeck Town: Tom Jackman Members Absent: Darsey Moon,

Guests: Rachel Fussell, Stowe Trails Partnership

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m.

Cady Hill Forest Signage

Ms. Fussell was present to discuss suggested updates to the Cady Hill Forest signage to incorporate new information to be provided by Stowe Trails Partnership. The update will include new trails, trails direction arrows and trail ratings as green, blue or black. The map will also provide EMS positions at different points, in particular at the intersections, a QR code, deer wintering areas, and photos will be deleted.

Discussion about whether to require dogs be leashed in summer at Cady Hill ensued and all agreed input is needed from the Stowe Land Trust and the town.

Mr. Jackman will contact David Jaqua about designing the updated sign and will bring back a draft for the Commission to review.

Commission Budget

Mr. Jackman reported that the town was experiencing financial challenges due to the drop in property tax and local option tax income. No match money would be available for funding a pilot project to remove Ash Trees on roads as discussed at the last meeting.

The Commission discussed whether to move forward with purchasing bear proof containers and decided to continue investigating options until spring. Mr. Blais described an inexpensive bear proof container at Lake Elmore State Park. Mr. Jackman will contact the state about these receptacles.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 pm. The next meeting will be held on October 7, 2020.

Respectfully submitted by Catherine Drake

Stowe Conservation Commission
Wednesday, October 7, 2020
Zoom Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Catherine Drake, Bob Johnson, Christine Dorsey McGowan, Alison Schoenbeck Town: Tom Jackman

Members Absent: Andre Blais, Robert Moore, Darsey Moon

The meeting was called to order at 5:06 p.m.

Minutes, Reports and Updates

The minutes of September 19, 2020 meeting were passed under motion of Ms. McGowan and a second by Mr. Johnson and passed unanimously.

Ms. McGowan reported a potential wash out beginning on the rec path trail across from the Round Hearth.

Mr. Jackman said the Stowe Trail Partnership has an American Corps volunteer assessing the signage in the trail system and some changes to signage may be forthcoming. STP will be doing some maintenance on a bridge in Sterling Forest.

Mr. Jackman has been working with the Catamount Trail Association regarding their taking over maintenance of some trails in Sterling Forest, including the Upper Gorge Loop. The town will enter into an agreement to formalize the understanding of work to be done.

Mr. Moore and Ms. Gowen will be attending the next Select board meeting of October 26, 2020 to update them on the status of commission activities.

2021 Conservation Commission Work Plan

The Commission discussed the upcoming year work plan and budget and considered several additions.

In the spring, the Commission will consider planting at Sunset Rock to continue eradication of the knotweed. There may be funds expended to reroute the trail at Sunset Rock.

\$300 will be added to Mayo Farm to continue fencing to discourage beaver activity.

Barberry at Cady Hill Forest has been thoroughly eradicated, but the Commission and Stowe Land Trust will continue to monitor.

Ms. Drake will contact the Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions and make sure everyone is getting their emails.

Arbor day event will be refunded to include funding for an event or program.

Emerald Ash Borer education and outreach will be added.

Stowe Energy Committee is in place and may request funding but have not to date.

The meeting adjourned at 6:15 pm. The next meeting will be held on October 21, 2020.

Respectfully submitted by Catherine Drake

Stowe Conservation Commission
Wednesday, October 21, 2020
Zoom Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Andre Blais, Catherine Drake, Bob Johnson, Christine Dorsey McGowan, Robert Moore, Darsey Moon. Alison Schoenbeck Town: Tom Jackman

The meeting was called to order at 5:10 p.m.

Minutes, Reports and Updates

The minutes of October 21, 2020 meeting were considered under motion of Ms. McGowan and a second by Mr. Johnson and passed unanimously with a typo correction.

Ms. Schoenbeck reported that she walked Cady Hill Forest and Sunset Rock with members of the Conservation Commission and appreciated the opportunity to learn more about the areas.

Mr. Moore said that the town received a grant to install a culvert on Maple Run Lane and UVM will be monitoring the site for efficacy and conducting a cost benefit analysis to see if the efforts improve water quality.

Mr. Blais reported that there were some blow downs at the Upper Gorge Spur Trail and also noticed some signage was torn down.

Ms. Drake reported that the Sunset Rock knotweed was mostly contained, and all agreed that the site should be monitored with the goal of alternative species plantings and tarp removal.

2021 Conservation Commission Work Plan

Mr. Moore and Ms. Gowen will be attending the next Select board meeting of October 26, 2020 to update them on Commission activities. The following will be presented:

- Emerald Ash Borer and the Ash tree inventory (future impacts)
- Bear education (bear resistant containers/coordination with Parks Department)
- Cady Hill Forest barberry project (very successful; huge number of plants removed)
- Financial support for the volleyball courts
- Hired Jed Lipsky Fall 2019 to clear the view at Sunset Rock
- Planted 200 trees at the Moscow Rec Field (erosion control but fail)
- Planted 400 trees at the beginning of the Rec Path (Act 250 permit/erosion and shade)
- Working with Stowe Trails Partnership to update the CHF kiosks and trail maps
- Roadside vegetation assessment
- Green Up Day

Ms. Moon asked about Sunset Rock break down of gate might be added and Ms. McGowan asked if there were increased impacts on any town lands due to the pandemic that might be mentioned. Mr. Jackman said that increased usage is happening, and all agreed that it should be mentioned.

The meeting adjourned at 6:23 pm. The next meeting will be held on November 18, 2020.

Respectfully submitted by Catherine Drake

Stowe Conservation Commission
Wednesday, December 2, 2020
Zoom Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Catherine Drake, Bob Johnson, Christine Dorsey McGowan, Robert Moore, Darsey Moon. Alison Schoenbeck. Members Absent: Andre Blais, Town: Tom Jackman

The meeting was called to order at 5:05 p.m.

Minutes, Reports and Updates

The Commission discussed the concept of a volunteer effort to monitor town owned lands as an additional level of oversight of the properties. Stowe Land Trust conducts stewardship monitoring but all agreed that as owners and managers of the property we should also consider taking on some responsibility. The Commission will take up the idea at a future meeting.

Discussion ensued about some other additional tasks that might be required of the Commission when the staff changes are made next year related to Mr. Jackman's retirement.

The minutes of October 21, 2020 meeting were considered under motion of Ms. McGowan and a second by Mr. Jackman and passed unanimously with corrections to the date of minutes approved (to read October 7, 2020) and the spelling of Ms. McGowen's name.

Ms. Moon reported that Stowe has been placed in a new category of risk related to the Emerald Ash Borer along with a couple of other towns.

Mr. Moore and Ms. McGowen attended the Select Board meeting of October 26, 2020 to update them on Commission activities. The Board was pleased with the work presented and supported the effort on the tree inventory and the noted increased use of town properties during the pandemic. The board was also supportive of the bear education initiative.

2021 Conservation Commission Work Plan

Ms. Schoenbeck volunteered to do some research on AirBnB and other websites to see if they could provide bear information in their postings for Stowe properties.

Mr. Jackman said that the Recreation Committee has chosen a bear proof container that will be placed in parks around town, thus we do not need to include funds in our budget. All agreed if containers were needed before Rec funds are available, we would be open to using some of our currently available CC funds to install containers earlier in the year. Mr. Jackman will discuss with the Recreation Committee.

The meeting adjourned at 6:23 pm. The next meeting will be held on December 16, 2020.
Respectfully submitted by Catherine Drake

Stowe Conservation Commission
Wednesday, December 16, 2020
Zoom Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Catherine Drake, Bob Johnson, Christine Dorsey McGowan, Robert Moore, Darsey Moon. Alison Schoenbeck. Members Absent: Andre Blais, Town: Tom Jackman

The meeting was called to order at 5:05 p.m.

Minutes, Reports and Updates

The minutes of December 2, 2020 meeting were considered under motion of Mrs. Moon and seconded by Mrs. McGowan with a correction to the spelling of Mrs. McGowan's name and passed unanimously.

Annual Report

The Commission reviewed the submission to the Stowe Town Annual Report prepared by Mr. Jackman. A motion was made by Mrs. Moon and seconded by Mrs. McGowan to approve the report as submitted and passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 6:18 pm. The next meeting will be held on January 6, 2021.

Respectfully submitted by Catherine Drake.