

Tunbridge Conservation Commission - February 21, 2022 - In Person and by Zoom
Approved Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Ellen Hosford, Maureen McCullough, Eliza Minnucci, Michael Sacca, Betsy Gaiser

Public Present: Jory Innes, Scott Beavers, Cheryl Metcalf, Bryon Keiser

Called to order at 6:03pm.

Review of Minutes

Discussion and Amendment to December minutes:

- Bryon Keiser's name was suggested as a potential commission member
- MS offered to attend ARPA meeting with Selectboard
- MS proposed starting the planning for a series of walks to be hosted this year
- AVCC Membership dues for 2022 have been paid
- instead of "fundraising" header should read "Projects"
- invasive species discussion is on hold until February meeting
- Approved as Amended

Meeting Recording

MS suggested recording our meeting, members agreed to do so.

EH will look into using Town's Zoom account so that recordings can be hosted indefinitely (current Zoom meetings are hosted on EM's paid Zoom account)

MS offered his own paid Zoom account

Action Item: EH to further pursue using town's Zoom account

Finalize Agenda

It will be EH's intention to go over agenda at the beginning of each meeting

MS suggests proposed agenda sent out prior to posting deadline, so that commission members may suggest/request changes

Other business can also always be added at the beginning of the meeting

EH notes a Public Comment section should always be added to the meeting

Members discussed remaining open to public comment during Commission discussion outside of official Public Comment time and agreed to remain open to public comment throughout meeting, while acknowledging that this norm could need to change should public comment rise to the level of obstructing the Commission's business.

MS expressed the hope that tonight's agenda includes the opportunity to vote on forwarding new board membership recommendations to the Selectboard.

Current Project Updates

Bluebird Houses

- Orders: 38 Assembled and 24 Kits
- Built so far: 22 Houses and 17 Kits
- Suggestion to cap orders for now, agreed upon
- Discussion about how to support community in mounting the houses
- Fact Sheet:
 - MS completed fact sheet
 - EH offered revised pamphlet style version

Action Item: EH will share pamphlet with members digitally and decision of how to proceed will follow

Action Item: EM to announce end of orders on Facebook, FrontPorchForum and listserve

Bluebird House Community Workshop

- Scheduled for March 12th at the library
- EM to organize in collaboration with Librarian, Mariah
- Participants will sign up and there will be a limit

Action Item: EM to organize, advertise, and host workshop - with support of available members and volunteers

COVID ARPA Update

No date has been set yet for Selectboard to discuss ARPA funding, Mariah Cilley will let us know

MS suggests public meeting(s) be held to include community in discussion

Elect Treasurer

Tabled until new membership is confirmed

Commission Membership

EH suggested having membership terms staggered, 2, 3, and 4 years.

Unanimous agreement from members

EH expressed hope that TCC develop longer term plans, and that membership reflect that vision in commitment and ability

EH proposes idea of working with Jens Hilke, Conservation Planner with Vermont Fish and Wildlife to develop long term planning

Prompted by references to our list of 2022 projects

MS requests list of these planned 2022 projects

MS suggests agenda item for next meeting

- ACT 171 Forest Connectivity - studying and developing recommendations for that chapter in the Town Plan

Hearing from potential members:

Bryon Keiser - Monarch Hill

- interested in becoming more engaged in town
- ICU nurse
- interest in the environment, formative experiences in nature and wilderness

Cheryl McCarty - Spring Road

- looking to engage in town
- previously an elementary school teacher, recently completed Masters Degree/Certification in Library Sciences
- building knowledge of local wildlife through observation and digital tools, such as iNaturalist and Merlin Birds

Jory Innes and Scott Beavers also present to pursue process of becoming TCC Members (introduced at January's meeting)

Discussion about term length interest.

Bryon suggested he may be most helpful as a volunteer, kept in the loop, as his work schedule is inconsistent, and would often preclude meeting attendance

MS made a motion to recommend that the Tunbridge Selectboard appoint Jory Innes (3-year term), Scott Beavers (2 year term) and Cheryl McCarty (4 year term) to the Tunbridge Conservation Commission.

EM seconded.

Discussion

Motion approved unanimously.

Action Item: EH will recommend Jory, Cheryl and Scott, and will communicate with all as to the date and time of the appropriate Selectboard meeting to attend.

Upcoming Project Updates

Coverts Walk at Larry Mengedoht's - Dickerman Hill Road

- April 23 (not May 7 which is Green Up Day)
- "Managing Forest Land for Wildlife"
- will include Dave Paganelli and Coverts Experts
- will be open to regional audience and more widely advertised
- our role is to sponsor and advertise

Wildflower Walk at Larry Mengedoht's - Dickerman Hill Road

- smaller audience
- focused on spring ephemerals

Green- Up Day

- May 7
- \$130 donated for BobnEd Bucks already

Garage Lot - Town Forest

- EM to work with Brenda Field on Naming Contest
- new name to be announced at Town Meeting, May 21
- Garage Lot is ready for trail signage, parking improvement and plans are moving along to construct a pavilion there

Additional Upcoming Projects on the Horizon:

- Bird and other walks
- Vernal Pools inventory
- First Branch Clean-up

Action Item: EH to forward a list of projects

ATV Access

Royalton Club has provided a map of requested class 3 and class 4 road access (May-October) Discussion.

TCC decided to consider conservation concerns related to this proposal and compose letter of recommended action to the Selectboard.

Initial concerns include Class 4 sections, proximity to wildlife management areas and forest blocks.

Action Item: MS to share related documents

Action Item: EH will ask Mariah about timeframe Selectboard is considering for taking action on this request to inform our process in drafting recommendations

Community Wildlife Update

Lots of Bald Eagles around!

Gray fox sightings all over town

Big goldfinch year

Bluebirds in town now

Flock of snow buntings

Next Meeting: Monday, March 21, 6pm at the Library and by Zoom

Adjourned: 8:30

Minutes addendum, Current Membership and Terms:

Ellen Hosford, 4 year term ends October, 2023

Eliza Minnucci, 4 year term ends October, 2023

Maureen McCullough, 4 year term ends November, 2023

Michael Sacca, 4 year term ends April, 2025

Betsy Gaiser, 4 year term ends November, 2025