



**Town of Stowe
Conservation Commission
Monday January 13, 2025
MEETING MINUTES**

A regular meeting of the Conservation Commission was held on Monday January 13, 2025, at 5:30 pm. The meeting was held via zoom. Commission Members in attendance:

Catherine Gott, Jacquie Mauer, Philip Branton, Evan Freund, Kay Barrett, and Seb Sweatman. Staff in attendance: Sarah McShane. Student Representatives in attendance:

Tanner Gregory, Mady Lawver, and Sophia Brasse. Others in attendance: Tom Rogers, Kenzie Brunner of Stowe Trails Partnership (SLT), Ryan Thibeault, and Evan Chismark.

Call to Order The meeting began at approximately 5:30 PM.

Election of Temporary Chair. With J.Mauer recently stepping down as Chair, the Commission discussed electing a temporary chair to serve until the first meeting in May when the Rules of Procedure call for the election of officers. K.Barrett motioned to elect C.Gott as Chair. P.Branton seconded. With no other nominations, the motion passed unanimously. Staff noted that with C.Gott now serving as Chair, the Commission must also elect a Vice-Chair. P.Branton motioned to nominate E.Freund as Vice Chair. E.Freund motioned to nominate K.Barrett as Vice Chair. J.Mauer motioned to nominate P.Branton as Vice Chair. C.Gott & E.Freund seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. C.Gott was elected Chair and P.Branton was elected as Vice Chair.

Public Comments & Adjustments to the Agenda. None

Review Meeting Minutes [11/25/2024] P.Branton motioned to accept the prior meeting minutes. S.Sweatman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Meet with Tom Rogers of Stowe Land Trust (SLT). C.Gott introduced Tom Rogers, the new executive director of SLT. T.Rogers provided a brief overview of SLT and the historic relationship with the Town. He talked about the Mayo Farm conservation easement renewal and the Stowe 2050 community discussions. E.Freund suggested that there is an open seat on the Commission if a SLT representative is interested in serving. The group talked about the Mayo Farm conservation easement renewal process and whether there would be a conflict of interest with a SLT representative serving. T.Rogers talked about the underlying deed restrictions on Mayo Farm and the amendment process.

Review SLT Recommended Amendments to Sterling Forest Management Plan.

C.Gott & S.McShane provided a brief overview of the recommended SLT amendments. S.Sweatman requested the recommendations be captured in the minutes as follows:

- Sections 2.1.2 and 2.4 of the plan should specify that for any harvests occurring on the SLT and VHCB conserved Maple Run Lane Chase parcel (MRLC), a forest management plan must first be developed in consultation with the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation and the Department of Fish and Wildlife, and that Stowe Land Trust and VHCB's written approval of the plan (including stand-level timber harvest plans) is required. This land management plan is great but is not detailed enough for us to provide written approval of any proposed future harvesting that might occur on the parcel.
- Under Section 11.2, VHCB should be named as a coholder of the SLT Maple Run Lane Chase Conservation Easement. I would also suggest adding information around when consultation, notification, or approval from SLT and VHCB is needed for activities on MRLC per the terms of the conservation easement to ensure that the Town and SCC are aware of these requirements.

As an aside, in 2015, SLT received a disgruntled email from a neighbor because SLT referenced informal parking on Maple Run Lane, and we removed the language from our website thereafter. I see that there's a similar reference on pages 6 and 7 of the updated draft plan. I believe that neighbor has since moved but wanted to make you aware of the history.

Following a brief discussion, P.Branton motioned to approve the recommended amendments. K.Barrett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Staff will pass the recommended amendments on to the Town Manager for Selectboard consideration.

Review Cady Hill Management Plan & Public Comments. K.Brunner, Executive Director of STP, introduced herself and her reason for attending the meeting. She reported that she is attending to discuss the winter use of Cady Hill Forest and mechanical grooming. Ryan Thibault (Ranch Camp & Mountain Bike Club) and Evan Chismark (Ranch Camp & former director of STP) were also in attendance. E.Chismark provided an overview of the prior conversations and the importance of expanding winter use of the forest by having a packed groomed surface. Members discussed the process for amending the management plan and the potential for a pilot project. Members agreed to dedicate March/April to moving forward and how a groomed trail surface may accommodate other winter users. C.Gott made note of the annual maintenance report recently submitted by STP. Members spoke of changes in outdoor recreation since Cady Hill was originally conserved.

Finalize Recommended Mayo Farm Agricultural Lease Amendments. P.Branton motioned to approve the letter as written. E.Freund seconded. The motion passed unanimously. S.Sweatman inquired whether there could be a sign installed to explain the management/mowing changes. S.McShane explained the process for recommending changes for Selectboard consideration.

Review Draft Annual Conservation Commission Report. C.Gott provided an overview. S.McShane circulated a draft. S.Sweatman inquired about financial numbers. C.Gott suggested including former members who recently served. Members offered other minor changes. Staff will incorporate the suggested changes and pass along to the Assistant Town Manager to be included in the Annual Town Meeting Day report.

Conservationist of the Year. P.Branton suggested property owner Ron Stancliff as a potential nominee and noted he recently conserved Joes Pond. The property has public access and is conserved by SLT. The Commission will continue to consider and make a final decision at the next meeting.

General Reports & Updates.

Vacant CC Seats – Members brainstormed potential members for the one vacant seat on the Commission.

Other Business – Moscow Rec Fields – C.Gott noted that she had read in the meeting minutes of a possible playground at Moscow Rec Fields. S.McShane provided background. E.Freund shared a trail condition report that can be used by student representatives to assess trail condition. J.Mauer mentioned the Mayo Farm renewal process. Members briefly discussed the work program/meeting calendar.

Other Business.

- Correspondence – In the Commission's meeting reminder, staff provided the STP Annual Maintenance plan for Sterling and Cady Hill.

Next Meeting Date- 01/27/2025. The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:03 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah McShane- Planning & Zoning Director