



Town of Stowe Conservation Commission Monday March 24, 2025 Meeting Minutes

A regular meeting of the Conservation Commission was held on Monday March 24, 2025, at 5:30 pm. The meeting was held in person at the Stowe Town Office with remote participation via zoom. Commission members in attendance: Catherine Gott, Jacquie Mauer, Philp Branton, Evan Freund, Kay Barrett, and Seb Sweatman. Staff in attendance: Sarah McShane. Student representatives in attendance: Mady Lawver, Tanner Gregory, and Sophia Brasse. Others in attendance: Dan Mirman, Ryan Percy, and others.

Call to Order. The meeting began at approximately 5:31 PM. There were technical difficulties involving zoom which caused a delay at the beginning of the meeting.

Public Comments & Adjustments to the Agenda. There were no public comments. C.Gott suggested an adjustment to the agenda to include an executive session to discuss the Mayo Farm Agricultural Lease proposals. Members agreed.

Review Meeting Minutes [03/10/2025]. S.Sweatman asked to amend the prior meetings to replace the term 'historic' with 'unused'. J.Mauer asked to change 'J.Mauer' to 'C.Gott' on line 7. J.Mauer motioned to approve the amended meeting minutes, seconded by E.Freund. Motion passed unanimously.

Presentation of Conservationist of the Year Award & Discussion

Chair Gott presented Ron Stancliff with the Conservationist of the Year Award. Mr. Stancliff thanked the Commission and invited Commission members to visit Joe's Pond. He described the land as 32 acres of ponds and swamps and shared stories from his childhood.

Review Mayo Farm Agricultural Lease Proposals & Recommend to the Selectboard

Chair C. Gott opened the discussion. Dan Mirman introduced himself and presented his proposal, explaining that he has not yet established a legal entity for the project to maintain flexibility. He stated that he would serve as the primary steward but has not yet determined whether the organization would be structured as a 501(c)(3) or another type of entity.

J. Mauer asked Mr. Mirman to clarify his goals at this stage. Mr. Mirman responded that he plans to begin by plowing and seeding the leased land with the assistance of hired labor and equipment, while also hoping for community involvement. He noted that his proposal is not yet fully developed and has not been decided whether the flower farm would include a "you-pick" option or a small flower stand. His vision is for a collaborative approach with the Town.

S. Sweatman inquired about potential storage needs for equipment. Mr. Mirman explained that he has been in discussions with local property owners about renting storage space. P. Branton asked about the types of flowers to be grown and how the fields would be managed during dormant periods. Mr. Mirman stated that he is still finalizing the seed mix, mentioning sunflowers and zinnias as possibilities, but emphasized that the flowers would have commercial value and be grown for that purpose. He acknowledged that his business model is still evolving and mentioned several potential approaches.

J. Mauer asked about access points and whether theft of flowers was a concern. C. Gott inquired about the specific fields Mr. Mirman was interested in leasing. Mr. Mirman indicated an initial interest in Fields D and E and shared his vision for the flower farm. S. Sweatman raised questions about the practicality and accessibility of Fields E, D, and G. Ryan Percy noted that parts of Field K, where the bike park was previously located, consist of a sandy knoll.

S. Sweatman also inquired about lease terms. Staff clarified that leases were previously five years but have been reduced to three years to align with the conservation easement renewal process. J. Mauer asked about Mr. Mirman's long-term vision and whether it extends beyond three years. Mr. Mirman responded that his long-term plan includes planting fruit trees and would likely extend beyond three years. C. Gott thanked Mr. Mirman for presenting his proposal.

Ryan Percy then presented his proposal, explaining that Fields D and E are the most valuable for his operation, particularly for growing corn. He addressed common concerns about corn cultivation, noting that it provides benefits such as reducing dumpster scavenging by black bears.

S. Sweatman asked about Fields I and K. R. Percy explained that some portions were left unplanted due to erosion risks on slopes. He noted that while Field K is currently planted with corn, he intends to remove approximately three acres and reseed the area, as the wettest sections are not viable for corn. However, the middle of Field K has well-draining soil.

J. Mauer asked about the use of Field J for parking during events, to which R. Percy confirmed that the northern half of Field J is drier and has been used for this purpose in the past. J. Mauer also inquired about Field F and its use as pasture. R. Percy clarified that while Field F is primarily used for hay, smaller portions serve as pasture.

S. Sweatman asked whether R. Percy had any knowledge of Cabot spraying wastewater on the fields. R. Percy confirmed that Cabot has not sprayed wastewater on Mayo Farm but has done so on other fields.

C. Gott inquired about consolidating farm operations on Weeks Hill and the challenges of transporting equipment through town. R. Percy explained that while they have made efforts to reduce debt, they are not currently in a financial position to take on additional borrowing. He noted that they aim to keep fields as close as possible to the main facility and avoid driving manure trucks through the village, adding that the West Hill traffic light has helped their operations.

S. Sweatman asked about a barn for spoiled corn. R. Percy confirmed that there is such a barn at Bouchard Farm, which has become a haven for ducks. He noted that ducks tend to avoid the feed pile, whereas turkeys access it freely. K. Barrett asked about the nutrient requirements of corn and the process of purchasing it.

Green Up Day & Be Bear Aware Campaign Planning

The Be Bear Aware banner will be displayed on Mountain Road. C. Gott highlighted a recent educational post on Front Porch Forum and Jaclyn Commeau's presentation on 'Living with Bears.' The Commission agreed for C. Gott to post on social media and front porch forum education materials about bears and removing bird feeders. Green Up Day is planned for May 3rd at the Alchemist.

Other Business

C.Gott mentioned she will attend the Selectboard Meeting to meet with a person interested in serving on the Commission. S.Sweatman inquired about the Commission's Town Plan discussions, staff noted the continued discussion will be on the next agenda.

At approximately 6:45 p.m. staff read the required motion to enter executive session - motion to find that premature general public knowledge would clearly place the public body, or a person involved, at a substantial disadvantage and enter executive session to consider real estate. K.Barrett, so moved and seconded by C.Gott. The motion passed. The Commission entered executive discussion to discuss the Mayo Farm Agricultural Lease proposals. No decisions were made. The Commission will finalize its recommendation during the next meeting.

Next Meeting Date- April 14th.

Adjourn @ approximately 7:20 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah McShane