



Town of Stowe Conservation Commission Monday April 14, 2025 Meeting Minutes

A regular meeting of the Conservation Commission was held on Monday April 14, 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, Philp Branton, Evan Freund, Kay Barrett, Walter Frame, and Seb Sweatman. Staff in attendance: Sarah McShane. Student representatives in attendance: Mady Lawver and Tanner Gregory. Others in attendance: Dan Mirman, Peter Danforth, and Julia Michaels.

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

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.

Review Meeting Minutes [03/24/2025]. K.Barrett motioned to approve the prior meeting minutes, seconded by S.Sweatman. Motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

Finalize Mayo Farm Agricultural Lease Recommendation. Chair C. Gott re-opened the discussion. Dan Mirman presented a revised proposal to the Commission, outlining changes since the last meeting. He proposed leasing portions of Fields D and E for flower cultivation and Field K for vegetables—though Field K would not be used until the second year. The project would operate under a new 501(c)(3) nonprofit, Stowe Flower Farm Project. Mirman provided an overview of the updated proposal and answered Commission questions. Topics of discussion included tillage methods, manure use, planting techniques, and pesticide/herbicide application. He emphasized the importance of using Fields D and E due to their environmental sensitivity, proximity to the river, and frequent foot traffic. When asked about equipment storage, Mirman noted that land preparation would begin with rented equipment, and he is exploring local storage options. He may need to install a temporary shed for tools if the lease moves forward. He also outlined a proposed “U-Pick” model for flower harvesting. P. Branton asked about potential revenue loss from the U-Pick model. Mirman acknowledged the risk but said he’s prepared for a potential loss in year one and will adjust the model based on experience. K. Barrett inquired whether flower farming requires more fertilizer; Mirman said he is not a soil expert but does not believe it does.

Public Comment: Julia Michaels (102 Baird Road) asked about the lease terms and suggested extending the Quiet Path to the Parker Barn if it is preserved in the future. P. Branton and S. McShane suggested this idea could be considered during upcoming discussions about the Mayo Farm conservation easement.

The Commission thanked participants and agreed to meet with Peter Danforth before moving forward with lease recommendations.

Peter Danforth – Riparian Plantings. Peter Danforth shared a newsletter from the Lamoille County Conservation District and provided an update on a grant the district received last fall to support restoration projects along the Little River. He outlined the types of eligible projects, noting that while tree planting can happen any time, it's best to avoid planting on actively eroding streambanks. In such cases, engineering solutions like tiered banks with willows and dogwoods are more appropriate. Danforth also discussed the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), which reduces sediment runoff when agricultural lands are taken out of production. He mentioned an upcoming Clean Water Service Provider grant deadline in May and highlighted a state program offering maintenance funding. C. Gott asked whether the Moscow Rec Fields might qualify for these grants. Staff inquired whether the Conservation District or the municipality should apply—Danforth confirmed either could.

He explained that erosion is part of a natural river stabilization process and emphasized the long-term nature of restoration work. E. Freund asked about knotweed eradication, and Danforth noted that the Fish & Wildlife Department offers matching grants for its removal. He added that Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) have funding programs for phosphorus reduction projects. S. Sweatman raised the topic of maintaining existing plantings and selecting effective planting sites. Danforth shared that agricultural fields often have higher nutrient content, and that input from river scientist like Staci Pomeroy and Rebecca Pfeiffer could help guide future planting projects. He also encouraged the Commission to consider upland areas higher in the watershed. The group discussed the pros and cons of spring vs. fall planting. Danforth suggested that by fall, they may have more information and be able to recommend a suitable project site. C. Gott thanked Danforth for the update and encouraged continued coordination.

Finalize Mayo Farm Agricultural Lease Recommendation (Executive Session). Following discussion, staff read the required motion to enter executive session, citing that premature public knowledge would place the public body or individuals involved at a substantial disadvantage. W. Frame moved to enter executive session to discuss contract matters, seconded by P. Branton. The motion passed unanimously, 6-0, and the Commission entered executive session to review the Mayo Farm Agricultural lease proposals.

At approximately 6:55 PM, the Commission exited executive session. Staff then presented the Commission's formal recommendation:

The Commission recommends that the Selectboard lease the agricultural fields to Ryan Percy, with an exception for up to 10 acres of Field K, to be leased to Dan Mirman for a pilot flower farm project. Prior to execution of the Field K lease, Dan Mirman must obtain Selectboard approval—based on the Conservation Commission's recommendation—for a three-year pilot plan. This plan must align with the Mayo Farm Management Plan and the conservation easement and demonstrate his capacity to implement it effectively. Approval must be obtained no later than May 28, 2025.

P. Branton moved to approve the recommendation as read, seconded by E. Freund. The motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

Town Plan Discussion (Discussion Tabled). C.Gott encouraged the Commission to continue to consider Town Plan ideas for future discussion. Staff recommended the Commission consider projects, policies, and programs.

Green Up Day & Be Bear Aware Campaign Planning. Staff will circulate a sign-up sheet for Green Up Day which is planned for May 3rd at the Alchemist.

Other Business. K. Barrett asked if the Commission would support her in sharing educational materials about delaying lawn cleanup until warmer weather arrives. The Commission expressed its support. Members also briefly discussed upcoming projects, including the Town Plan and the Cady Hill Management Plan. The meeting concluded with introductions and a warm welcome to new Commission member Walter Frame.

Next Meeting Date- April 28th.

Adjourned at approximately 7:15 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah McShane