



**Town of Stowe
Conservation Commission
Monday October 28, 2024
MEETING MINUTES**

A regular meeting of the Conservation Commission was held on Monday October 28, 2024, at 5:30 pm. The meeting was held in the Memorial Room of the Stowe Town Office with remote participation via zoom. Commission Members in Attendance: Jacquie Mauer, Phillip Branton, Evan Freund, Seb Sweatman, and Catherine Gott. Staff in Attendance: Sarah McShane. Student Representatives in Attendance: Maddie Lawver, Tanner Gregory, and Sophia Brasse. Others in Attendance: Carolyn Lawrence, Peter Danforth (including two NRCD staff).

Call to Order- J.Mauer called the meeting to order at approximately 5:30 PM. J.Mauer provided a meeting overview and introduced the newly appointed student representatives.

Public Comments & Adjustments to the Agenda – No public comments. J.Mauer asked to adjust the agenda to include discussion with Peter Danforth of Lamoille County NRCD.

Review Meeting Minutes [09/23/2024] S.Sweatman requested that the prior meeting minutes be amended to exclude the following words ‘*or list of additional resources.*’ Following discussion, on a motion by P.Branton, seconded by S.Sweatman, the amended minutes of the prior meeting passed without opposition.

Update from STP. STP Executive Director Carolyn Lawrence attended the meeting and provided an update. She explained that STP is no longer planning to install a tool shed at Cady Hill due to wetlands at the intended location. Instead, STP will use a trailer for tool storage. The Stowe Village Connector Trail is still in the planning phase. The proposed trail will impact wetlands, however, STP plans to install a wooden boardwalk in the wetland area which is an allowed use under the State of VT Wetland Rules. She explained STP hopes to build the trail in 2025 noting that the boardwalk itself will take approximately two months to construct. Commission members agreed to complete a trail walk/site visit on May 12th to discuss the proposed Trail #9 and Baby Bears in Cady Hill. Members discussed the process for amending the Cady Hill Management Plan to allow winter grooming. C.Lawrence explained STP recently met with VT Fish & Wildlife who offered their support for winter motorized grooming in Cady Hill Forest. Members discussed recirculating the Management Plan, developing a process for public input, and setting aside agenda time to discuss as a Commission.

Sterling Forest Management Plan – Review & Finalize Amendments. Members continued to discuss the proposed amendments to the Sterling Forest Management Plan. S.Sweatman inquired about the financial proceeds generated from the Phase 3 timber sales. Members discussed prior harvesting activities, transparency, bird monitoring, and financial records. Members discussed the Commission’s role in stewarding municipally owned conserved lands and not in financial decision-making. Following discussion members agreed to add the following language under Section 2.4:

The Commission recommends all economic costs and benefits data be captured by the Town of Stowe and be made available to the public.

Following discussion, on a motion by P.Branton, seconded by C.Gott, the Commission unanimously recommended approval of the amended Sterling Forest Management Plan to the Selectboard. Staff will

insert the recommended amendment and pass along to the Town Manager for scheduling and consideration by the Selectboard.

Meet with Lamoille County NRCD- Peter Danforth and NRCD staff attended the meeting. P.Danforth explained he recently received funding from the Clean Water Initiative and hired two new program specialists. He provided an overview of grant opportunities for the Upper Little River Watershed and explained they are hoping to identify up to fifteen projects that will have clean water benefits- both instream and buffer zone benefits. Members discussed possible riparian planting projects and whether a knotweed removal demonstration area might qualify for funding. P.Danforth suggested possibly holding a workshop and getting partners together. P.Danforth will continue to keep the Commission informed about funding opportunities and as possible projects are identified.

Mayo Farm Ag Lease- Staff explained the Mayo Farm agricultural lease will expire at the end of December. Members discussed the riparian buffer by the Quiet Path and the eroding streambank. Members inquired about Field G and noted a lot of frogs live in this area as it is very wet. Members wondered whether it might be an area to be re-wild and inquired about language within the lease regarding the wastewater disposal easement.

Stowe Town Plan – Conservation Commission Input- Members discussed the Stowe Town Plan and scheduling a time to discuss together as group. The next regular meeting is a holiday and the Memorial Room is not available for the regular second November meeting. The Commission could meet downstairs in Planning & Zoning or remotely. Members discussed scheduling different agenda topics including the Town Plan discussion, Cady Hill winter grooming, etc. Staff will work with the Chair to schedule upcoming meetings.

Student Representative Projects. J.Mauer mentioned she will send the student representatives information on the pollinator pathways group.

Next Meeting Date- TBD- Likely 11/25/2024. The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah McShane- Planning & Zoning Director