

Hartland Conservation Commission  
Monthly meeting January 8, 2025  
Damon Hall and zoom link

I. Attending: Commissioners: Anderegg, Barney, Crosby, Hill, Nelson, Waite, in person, Moore via zoom. Residents: Helen Esmond via Zoom.

II. Meeting called to order 7:03 PM by Chair Anderegg.

III. Minutes from December 11, 2024, moved and seconded, approved unanimously

IV. Treasurer's report deferred until February meeting, as no new expenditures.

V. Open meeting Law updates. New pieces of the Vermont Open Meeting Law (OML) took effect as of January 1st, 2025, in efforts to revise it after COVID restrictions had been lifted. There should be an official updated summary of these changes, but the timing of that is unclear. Meanwhile, Rob circulated a summary electronically prior to the meeting. There is now a municipal code of ethics, the elements of which sound like common sense and good practice. We believe we are considered an advisory committee, since we do not make binding decisions-- i.e. our actions and expenditures must be approved by the SelectBoard. Thus, we would not be *required* to adhere to these ethics, but in good faith, we are happy to continue complying with them. Notably for possible inclement winter weather, we would be allowed to hold meetings fully remotely. To be sure of our status, Jennifer will review the criteria to ensure that this fully remote provision would apply to us. Also of note, though it has not been an issue for us, members cannot vote by proxy; they must represent themselves, though voting via Zoom is fine.

VI. Proposed cell tower—Rob led a discussion of the question as to whether the Commission should offer a statement regarding conservation concerns posed by the proposed structure and siting of the tower. Points emerging from the discussion:

- 1) Any commissioner could make public statements for their own personal opinion, which is independent from any statement the Commission might offer.
- 2) The proposed location is not on the Sunnymede property; it is on the west side of Town Farm Hill Road, near Breeze Hill Cottage.
- 3) The company that is proposing the structure is ITW, which was denied a proposed structure in Enosburg, VT. The unit proposed for Hartland is even taller than that.
- 4) The initially contracted services *do not* include commercial wireless carriers, though it is possible some might sign on in the future. Initial use would be for business users.
- 5) Another possible but as yet uncontracted use would be as a "repeater" station for emergency services. We do not know if Hartland Fire department has had an issue with getting signals reliably in that area, but this could be checked into with the fire Chief. We would also want to know, if it was seen as a needed emergency service relay, how tall it would need to be for that use, in order to be effective.
- 6) Specific natural resource issues could include the possible effect of EMF radiation on wildlife, erosive impact of creating the building site and road access to the site, intrusion to the natural beauty of the area by having such an outsize intrusion into the skyline.

Jennifer will draft a statement for the commission to review at the February meeting. While initial listserv postings cited a January 15th deadline, we believe that is not the actual deadline, as public comment usually follows submitting to the Public Utility Commission (PUC), and ITW has not sent it to the PUC yet.

VII. Goals for our ongoing work (calendar year v. fiscal year has been unclear parameter)

A. Our process last year included a wide-ranging brainstorm list of goals that was then thinned.

B. Possible new goals to take on, as well as ones to continue:

1. Water withdrawal from Lull Brook: monitor, problem solve re enforcement?

2. Christmas Bird Count—explore whether we would need to coordinate with Woodstock or set up our own.

3. Create a policy about public access to 17 Acre Woods. Jennifer will get the work group together with the school and consult with the Selectboard. There is enabling policy for the classroom use of the town property, but it does not address the new accessible trail. Goals include clarifying permitted types of public use, as well as timing when the public can be present on the trail and property.

4. Educational —

a. Poison ivy strategy/management, alternatives to glyphosate. School in Reading, VT controlled it with goats. UVM Extension could partner, may have material for public.

b. Untangle confusion over recycling: different companies' offerings and rules, which differ as to what is acceptable. We would likely want to coordinate or host a meeting with the new Solid Waste Management District representative. We might create a fun, hands-on event, such as Inviting the public to bring items they've been uncertain how to dispose of or recycle, and pose their questions to the expert.

c. Hartland Invasive Plant patrol (Maybe use alternate word instead of invasive, since some problematic plants are native, but are more vigorous now with human disturbance and climate change.)

d. Presentations likely already exist on common topics, so if we could access them and acknowledge the source, we wouldn't need to create programs anew.

5. Drone imaging of public lands, and/or problematic areas. Time lapse photos of areas such as the erosion impacting the Meacham land can show more clearly the scope and progression of changes that have been noted, and might convince parties to act.

6. Digital map insets for the public lands and trails would be great additions to the guide that we plan to update. Online links rather than creation of hard copies may be more in tune with users who rely on electronic media, with perhaps a few paper copies created for those who do not have easy access to mobile devices.

7. Encourage and publicize public transportation options in the area, including use during Commission sponsored events (which could also ease parking issues)

C. Each commissioner is encouraged to identify topics they would be in charge of moving forward.

D. Jennifer may revise what would essentially be a mission statement for the Commission, to reflect our overarching and ongoing goals.

E. Tina will revise the list to reflect the discussion, then circulate it separately from the minutes, so Rob can reformat and circulate before the next meeting.

VIII. Conservation Commission Award. Discussion identified worthy individuals, who will be named during the presentation at Town Meeting. There is precedent for multiple recipients engaged on a single pursuit.

#### IX. Updates

A. Public lands: Rob had circulated a list of the public areas he proposed that we include in the Second Edition of the guide to public places in Hartland. He solicited additions to the list. The Fish & Wildlife shooting range was suggested, particularly with a list of restrictions that apply to who is allowed and when it is open. Guy will check to see if the trail along Harlow Brook is public. Dan would like to take on North Hartland Lake write up, and River access. Specific data from other sites can be sent to Rob.

B. Rob will re-publicize the two open spots on our Commission. We have not received inquiries following the listserv postings by the Town Manager.

C. Pohl property--Deal is in final stages to complete the sale, ideally by mid-January.

D. Educational presentations—

1. Hannah can repeat her Emerald Ash Borer talk on Zoom, and it can be recorded for future viewing.

2. Recycling—maybe Ham Gillette's successor would be interested

E. Sumner Falls. There are two areas that would need shoring up/protection before wide use of the trails, so Guy proposed we work with Upper Valley Trails Alliance (UVTA) again this year. We likely need to renew our membership, and maybe rehire them to allow them to advise us on remediation measures, and to do the work. After this discussion, it was approved unanimously to renew membership in UVTA if they are willing to consult and/or do the work. Guy will check with UVTA to verify whether we need to renew, and to see if they can schedule the work this year.

F. CT River Joint Commission, Mt Ascutney subcommittee. Dan reported that following flood damage, the Commission received and approved an application to drain the Blow Me Down Brook pond in order to do remediation work, improving resilience of the area.

<https://crjc.org/riverwide/> is a link to the Joint Commission's speaker series from past years. They might be a resource for an educational speaker regarding glyphosate use,

G. Agricultural recycling: Guy is helping regional farmers be able to recycle the plastic used to wrap hay bales. Forty farms have signed up so far to collect and donate their plastic, and Guy is contacting farms in Massachusetts to see who is interested there. A Pennsylvania company, EFS Plastics, has agreed to buy material after it has been compressed into one-ton bales, likely paying from \$60 to \$100/ton. Guy is distributing bulk bags into which farmers put their folded, cleaned, used wrap. Collection runs would pick up full bags to be ready for compression. The holdup now is finding a nearby compactor, so that trucking costs don't exceed the potential payment from the manufacturer. While there is a compactor at the Lebanon, NH landfill, it has not been made available for this project.

H. Chemical contamination. As the meeting was winding up, there was brief mention of recent reports on forever chemicals being detected in soils and ground water that reflect the practice of spreading biosolids on fields, as well as issues with leachate

from landfills. This may bear further discussion, though may lie outside the Commission's purview.

Meeting adjourned at 8:33 PM

Respectfully submitted,  
Tina Barney, Scribe