

Hartland Conservation Commission
June 11, 2025 meeting
(in person at Damon Hall, and online)

Attendance: Commissioners: Anderegg, Barney, Crosby, Gottsegen, Hill, Waite in person, with Nelson online. Guests: Phil Hobbie; John Broker-Campbell, David Singer, Zooey Zullo in person; Olivia Tregubov and Chuck Fenton online.

I. Meeting called to order by Chair Anderegg, introductions, welcome to speak

II. Town Manager: John Broker-Campbell provided history of Selectboard's decision to adopt a pledge for themselves, modeled on a template developed by Vermont League of Cities and Towns, to fill a void that had no agreed upon rules and procedures for member conduct in and outside of the meeting. Their decision reflected activity in Vermont State government to create transparent ethical rules, as well as creating a VT Ethics Commission, (3 people). There is movement towards asking all state and local officials, including members of commission to adopt one. The Conservation Commission is advisory, without regulatory authority, so we are not required by statute to comply. The template for the ethics pledge follows Act 171, Municipal code of ethics. At the local level, John Broker-Campbell is the Ethics Liaison, so he would be the one to examine any issues that arise around potential ethical violations. Establishment of an ethical framework pro-actively may spare our town from tensions other areas have experienced around divisive topics. John will adjust the wording of the pledge the Selectboard used, to make it applicable to our body being a Commission and advisory. Rob will circulate the resulting draft to Commissioners. We will discuss the pledge at our September Commission meeting.

III. Minutes from May 14th. The draft minutes were circulated electronically before the meeting, and were approved unanimously with a spelling correction.

IV. Treasurer's report

A. Fund balances:

1. \$755.95 general fund with \$500 donation credit = \$1255.95 to spend
\$500 unrestricted, given in 2024, restored to general fund this year
2. \$10,837.34 Conservation Trust Fund

B. Includes interim spending of \$81.25, to Gary Trachier--adding trails, cleaning details. Current version of map will be emailed to Conservation commission.
Final version to include trail names voted on later in meeting

C. Pre-approval for summer spending on anticipated expenses

Note: Not all will be purchased or paid before 6/30/2025, but enough will be paid to use all our budgeted funds for the current fiscal year.
Add'l purchases can be made later in the summer. Next meeting 9/10/25
Water testing—\$350 for June
Burlap for ground cover—up to \$300.

Trail work —can pre-pay a portion
2 x \$500 labor (up to \$1000) + up to \$970+ in materials.
Maybe crushed stone from the town? may not be needed,
Weed wrench-- up to \$400
Water testing in July and August & up to \$700

Moved, seconded, discussed the above expenditures. Motion to approve spending over summer without requirement for an additional meeting, up to the amounts above for each item, approved unanimously.

Those that can be invoiced prior to June 30, 2025 will be paid through current fiscal year allocation. Remaining approved items can be paid through next fiscal year's funds. All the above items will be used in service of our ongoing projects. Unanimously approved.

V. Water testing

Reminder that the timely processing of samples for accurate results requires no recent rain (avoid runoff artifact), sampling occurs Monday through Thursday, to allow delivery to lab and test turnaround. Testing on the 7 sites takes about 90 minutes. When Rob identifies a viable sampling window, he will email commissioners to see who is available to help with the collections. Rubber boots or old sneakers with good treads are helpful.

VI. Pohl conservation area celebration Sunday, June 22, 2025, 2-5 PM.

Upper Valley Land Trust (UVLT) and the Hartland Conservation Commission are co-sponsoring and organizing the event, with several activities, starting near the gravel pit. Additional parking is across the road by the town garage, with care not to block fire station access.

Bird and Nature walks, invasive species identification, posing with the massive Black Birch tree, which may be the largest not only in Vermont, but possibly also in the country! . Mac's will provide Maple Creamees! There will be a talk about making hay.

No dogs allowed at the event. If it rains, celebration will be at Damon Hall in the same time slot. The large signboard by Damon Hall will include an announcement.

People can address comments and hopes for the property to the UVLT representatives at the event. Ideas include advocating for prompt layout of 3 season trails, possibly with cycling trails.

While the first affordable housing proposal was not approved by its financial backers, the option for housing on the designated 7 acres will be retained for 10 years, in the hopes another developer may be interested.

VII. Old Home Days planning—Rob has the tent and banner. He'll get table and chairs, historically from VINS, with possible alternative of fire department. Visuals and materials at our booth will include: maps of Sumner Falls, Pohl property and 17 Acre Woods trail, literature on invasive species, and the guide to Hartland public areas, listing all our public properties. Rob would like to raffle off a copy of Nature's Best Hope, with tickets free to those who come to the booth. Given the popularity of the list serve posts based on Nature's Best Hope, he will print a few copies of the series. If the book raffle is popular, next year we might offer a copy of What Can I Do?, Tallamy's latest book.

Hours: Set up at 9 AM, parade at 10 AM, staff booth until 1 PM.

VIII. Updates

A. Sumner Falls—trail naming. After spirited discussion of the listed possibilities, Commissioners approved "North Trail" and "Cellar Hole Trail" with no dissensions. After work to improve safety concerns, we should clear visual paths to the nominal Cellar Hole.

B. Commission Openings—2 openings, and 4 completed applications. While normal terms are 4 years, the current openings arose when people needed to leave the commission part way through their term, so successful candidates will be up for reelection in 1 or 2 years, to then be considered for a full 4 year appointment. All applicants have attended at least one meeting in person. Executive session at end of meeting to make a recommendation to the Selectboard.

C. Educational Presentations/Bird Walks. Pohl celebration will include these.

D. 17-Acre Wood—Jennifer put on post with a guide rope to keep people on the trail. The accessible trail is completed, and Commissioners may tour it.

IX. Other business

Howe Farm—This 35 acre property on Mace Hill Road is near a cemetery, with 15 acres open land, and has a barn and second outbuilding but no house. It already has a UVLT conservation easement from 2018 (assisted with \$10K from the Commission) which may prohibit any further building. The owners are considering donating the parcel to the town. The Selectboard will take this up at a future meeting. Commissioners are encouraged to pass ideas on to Rob if they foresee possible uses for the land.

X. Executive session—to consider commission candidates and settle on recommendation to the Select Board, it was moved, seconded and approved to go into executive session at 8:40 PM. We are grateful to have had 4 wonderful candidates apply, but we only have 2 openings. The Commission voted unanimously on a recommendation to the Selectboard, which Rob will convey.

Executive session ended at 8:59 PM. Meeting adjourned at 9 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Tina Barney, scribe