

Hartland Conservation Commission  
Monthly meeting 11 13 2024  
In person and Zoom

Attending: Commissioners: Anderegg, Barney, White, Hill, in person at Damon Hall; Nelson and Moore by zoom. Hartland resident Helen Esmond joined by zoom.

Meeting called to order at 7:06 by Chair Anderegg, who noted that there were no new folks, so we dispensed with introductions.

I. Minutes: The version that was circulated electronically before the meeting was approved unanimously with a single edit, to reflect that Doug Hill was not present at the walk at Sumner Falls that was referred to in the original version.

II. Treasurer's report: Numbers were estimated in person, with full data supplied by email after the meeting. After the \$500 dollar correctly redirected from the trust fund to our operating budget, balances were \$1345.00 in the general fund, and \$10,239.63 in the conservation trust fund.

Wish list for spring expenditures: Weed Wrench for removing invasives on town properties, such as honeysuckle at Sumner Falls, with the idea that the tool might be stored at the library for loaning out to town residents. Since the original manufacturer has stopped making them, Rob will evaluate the knockoffs for durability and effectiveness.

Perhaps there could be a dog waste station at Sumner Falls, but folks observed that these fill up quickly at popular sites, so we'd need to be sure there were provisions for monitoring and prompt pick up.

Action: After Jennifer made the case for preventing damage on the new trails, the Commission voted unanimously to approve spending up to \$300 on bulk burlap and conservation mix seeds for use at Sumner Falls and the 17 Acre Woods accessible trails,. This will reduce erosion on steeply sloped areas exposed during the excavation of trails at each site. Jennifer will speak with Guy in order to decide on the appropriate quantity of materials to meet the needs of the two sites.

Purchase of additional signage on public lands will be on hold until a legal case from Tunbridge works its way through the Vermont judiciary , as it will determine whether citizens whose land abuts legal trails can restrict what the town can do on legal trails.

III. Review on goals for the year: Rob led the discussion of those that have been completed, those that are underway, and those that we haven't attained. Discussion noted that, as with the town report, periodicity should correlate with the fiscal year (July 1-June 30) rather than the calendar year. Thus, we have time left to accomplish/finish the remaining items from our current goal list.

Additional educational/public engagement activities, with indoor ones this winter and in person ones in the spring, could include the following:

A. Advertise the Commission with a meet and greet at the library. We might create a celebration/party for the 35th year anniversary of the commission, focusing on accomplishments over the years. Meanwhile, we could collate the pieces Rob has been creating and distributing on the list serve, as they highlight our history and activities. Such a compilation might be printed out and displayed at the library, and perhaps entered onto the town's web site. It might also function as a recruitment tool.

B. Make a presentation or invite a speaker to the Aging in Hartland Friday gathering. Lyndsay Rose is the coordinator, and Will can ask her about openings.

C. Invasive plant control training--could focus on honeysuckle at Sumner Falls.

D. Celebration of 17 Acre Woods accessible trail. Select a fine spring day, coordinating with the school's schedule.

E. Vernal Pool inventory. We can follow up with folks who responded to Rob's query this spring, to see which ones look like they are productive amphibian refuges. Will wasn't able to survey the one near him this spring, but may be do so in spring 2025.

F. Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). We have moved to a phase of tracking the infestation through the town. We will plan to complete a driving survey of trees along Brothers Road. Given turnover on the Select Board, we will give a presentation of our data on the presence, concentrated populations, and trees in locations where their death would pose a safety hazard, either to structures (Martinsville bridge) or passersby. We know that the budget is tight, so are not expecting the town to set aside money for future or preventive removal.

G. Invasives in the Town Forest. Plan to flag and map their locations.

H. Water analysis & macroinvertebrates at Shepherd's Brook--await restored flow.

I. Resolution of issues with Town Forest Management Plan. We learned the sad news that Frost Hammond has died. Rob will see if Hannah can suggest a state wildlife biologist who could review the plan for impact on wildlife, which was to have been done by Frost. If the person who did the plan for the nearby Wildlife Management Area is still in the department, it could allow coordinated assessment between the two parcels. We might consider mounting and monitoring game cameras in the area to identify patterns of wildlife movement and use of the area. [Subsequent discussion identified a discrepancy in understanding of what is required before a game camera can be placed--i.e. whether explicit permission is needed from a landowner before the camera is mounted, or whether it's only a courtesy and best practice, but not a legal requirement. Doug will research the question further.]

J. Sumner Falls trails--aim to have a grand opening, community hike, once safety issues are addressed. There is one section that has a drop off at a bend, where a barrier can be placed (like a large log), and a second area at the end of a trail that is steep enough to benefit from steps or grading. Maybe Guy can work with a youth group to address the slope.

K. Pohl property--Proceeding through steps to complete the purchase. While they are hoping to have it done by year's end, the contract deadline isn't until March 2025.

L. Town report. Rob sent commissioners an electronic version before the meeting. Rob will incorporate changes suggested during this meeting.

Action: Commission voted unanimously to have Rob submit the document for town report, after revising with the few amendments discussed.

M. . Education for the community—

1. Hannah Dallas will reprise her talk on EAB, doing it on zoom, so it can be recorded and available for viewing later. She would also like to do one on Beech leaf disease. 2. The Truth about recycling—Hamilton Gilette is at Woodstock 11 14 24 for Green Drinks, and might be able to have a similar event in Hartland.

3. Promoting old growth forest characteristics—How to Love a Forest, by Ethan Tapper, published this year. He is now doing a speaking tour, and we could see if he would do one in Hartland.

4. Native Plants. The Native Plant Trust has classes. Vermont Center for Ecostudies might do presentations. Hartland folks are involved in the Chestnut tree recovery effort at the Windsor Grasslands property, and might be willing to speak about their plans for pure American Chestnuts. Tina suggested that we might want to also host folks who are growing and promoting blight-resistant hybrid seedlings, since they can be providing human food from a perennial crop that doesn't require tillage, herbicides or pesticides.

IV. Updates—

A. Costs for treating Ash trees for Emerald Ash Borer.—Jennifer met with Ed White of Bartlett tree service to find out current treatment costs, which vary with the size of the tree needing to be treated (they have to be at least 10" diameter at breast height), as well as the total number of trees, access and distance between trees, Treatments would continue for the life of the tree, with new doses every two years, injecting a chemical under the bark, in the spring when sap is moving up the tree, so the insecticide is drawn up into the canopy. For her site, it would total \$1000 per treatment to address all 5 trees they selected.

B. Pohl project--advocates are working with Housing Conservation Board to get the easement completed, including a survey to facilitate the subdivision, title and deed work, They are working on collecting all the money that was pledged.

C. Water withdrawal from Lull's Brook. While eventually we hope to bring up the issue with the Select Board, we don't have enough data on how often or how much water is being withdrawn by the company that pumps it to sell to pool owners. Since access is from town owned property, and the fire department is nearby, we might check in with the Fire Chief and see if they have interest in supporting our efforts to document the withdrawals. Might a trail cam be installed?

Jennifer agreed to take notes at December's meeting, as Tina will be away.

Meeting adjourned 8:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Tina Barney, Scribe

