

Mount Holly Conservation Commission (MHCC)

Meeting Minutes

October 6, 2020

Opening

The regular meeting of the Mount Holly Conservation Commission (MHCC) was called to order at 7:05 pm on October 6, 2020 via Zoom by Fra DeVine.

Present

Annette Lynch, Fra DeVine, Peter Smith, Philippe Crane, Mark Zelis, Philip Leonard, Fred Garrow, Jim Corven

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was accepted by consensus.

Approval of Minutes

P. Crane moved to accept the minutes, seconded by P. Leonard, approved unanimously.

Open Issues

F. DeVine informed the members that Jay Ummel has resigned from the MHCC due to personal demands on his time. We currently have one opening.

P. Crane recommended that we include Action Items in the minutes. Approved by consensus.

All members had received copies of samples charters or **Policies & Procedures** obtained from Weston, Shrewsbury, Essex, and Greensboro to review. P. Leonard had spoken with a Wallingford CC member to get their perspective. F. DeVine had sent out a draft Policy & Procedures for the Mount Holly Conservation Commission (MHCC) for members to review before the meeting. Members discussed the various levels of documents noting that some were limited, basic guidelines while others provided a more detailed structure. It was agreed that MHCC could begin with a more detailed charter and may always make modifications over time. It was agreed to develop a clear mission statement/purpose and P. Smith agreed to compile material from the state statute (sections 1, 2, 8, & 9), Weston's charter, the draft MHCC document, plus a statement about education and public awareness into a draft mission statement to be reviewed by members. It was also agreed that a primary purpose of the Commission is to support the MH Select Board and Planning Commission in developing a new town plan. A fundamental aspect of this will be to update and enhance the Arrowwood Natural Heritage Element Inventory and Assessment Report.

New Business

A. Lynch provided the historical background of the **Arrowwood Report** that was prepared just as the town was completing the Town Plan of 2008. Annette explained the importance of having

a complete, updated inventory of natural resources for the town plan and for the management of development in town. In support of the update a proposal has just been submitted by members of the Mount Holly Conservation Trust (MHCT) with approval by the MH Select Board, for the **Municipal Planning Grant** (MPG) which would fund the costs of a consultant to lead the report update. The response to this proposal is expected by early December 2020.

P. Smith described the importance of the town plan in controlling development by explaining how the existence of a detailed plan for MH was vital in the court case which decided against an exotic zoo proposal for MH in the past. Since the zoo was not consistent with the town plan and there was official opposition to the zoo the court ruled against the project. Without the plan to define town priorities the zoo project might have been allowed to proceed.

M. Zelis stated his concerns about the condition of **Star Lake** and has proposed forming a working group to develop a plan to address the deteriorating water quality, algal overgrowth, and a fish die off this summer. Anne Hanson discussed her efforts with a small group of concerned people who have made an effort to remove the algal and aquatic plant overgrowth from the dam and swimming area using an aquatic rake and manual labor. The major area of the lake remains overgrown with vegetation. P. Smith explained that part of the problem stems from the past ill-advised planting of exotic water lilies that were introduced by at least one resident. He also recounted that a major effort to drain the lake and bulldoze the accumulated sediment/muck from the lake bottom occurred in the late 1940s. J. Corven informed the Commission that there may be funding soon available from the Lake Champlain Basin Program to help with Star Lake. He emphasized that the first step might be to better understand the natural ecological and man-made processes occurring in the lake basin before trying remedies that may not have a long-term effect. M. Zelis will investigate grant opportunities and coordinate the group to deal with Star Lake conditions.

J. Corven reminded the Commission members of the upcoming Summit meeting and training sessions of the **Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions** (AVCC). The next Summit presentation will be on Wednesday, Oct. 7 and the conservation commission training sessions will be on Mondays October 12, 19, & 26. Registration is required but the training is free. All members were encouraged to participate.

F. DeVine relayed the announcement from Jennifer Andrews that the **MH Planning Commission** has an opening and it was suggested that it might be a good thing to have a member of the MHCC on the Planning Commission to facilitate communications.

F. DeVine described the **organizational support** offered by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department through Jens Hilke and asked who would be available for a weekday presentation (online/Zoom). Most members agreed so a Doodle schedule will be sent out to determine the most acceptable date and time for members.

F. DeVine discussed the **Open Meeting** law requirement that the MHCC must announce upcoming meeting to the public using accepted posting sites in town in addition to our current practice of using the MH Newsflash, Chit Chat, and town website. Additionally, meeting minutes are to be produced in draft form with 48 hours of the meeting and submitted to the MH Town Office.

J. Corven reported that a 2-hour training about **Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) monitoring** was completed (online) on 10/5/2020 by several interested people who will begin recording the presence of ash trees within public and utility right-of-ways in town using the Collector app on smart phones or tablets.. Others who are interested may still get involved and should contact Jeff Chase.

Action Items

- Develop a draft mission statement for review by the MHCC. (P. Smith)
- Organize a plan for the Star Lake working group. (M. Zelis)
- Provide members with details on AVCC training sessions. (J. Corven)
- Register and attend AVCC online Summit and training sessions. (all members)
- Determine best date & time for a presentation by Jens Hilke. (F. DeVine)
- Track & report on the Champlain Lake Basin Program call for proposals. (J. Corven)

Next Meeting

The next meeting of MHCC will be on Monday, November 2 at 7:00 pm via Zoom. The agenda will be provided by Fra DeVine.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by A. Lynch, seconded by M. Zelis, approved unanimously. 8:10 pm.

Minutes submitted by Jim Corven, acting clerk.