

Mount Holly Conservation Commission (MHCC)

Meeting Minutes

February 2, 2021

Opening

The regular meeting of the Mount Holly Conservation Commission (MHCC) was called to order at 7:11 pm on February 2, 2021 via Zoom by Fra DeVine.

Present

Annette Lynch, Fra DeVine, Peter Smith, Nicole Lewis, Philippe Crane, Philip Leonard, Fred Garrow, Jim Corven. Guests: Jon McCann

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was accepted by consensus.

Approval of Minutes

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

Open Issues

F. DeVine provided an update of the **community survey** and proposed timeline that was provided by Prof. Rich Clark (Castleton U.). A revised draft of the survey questions had been sent out to the MHCC for comments. He stated that the survey sub-committee would be meeting soon to discuss further arrangements with R. Clark and students.

New Business

A. Lynch proposed that a comprehensive **inventory** of natural, cultural, and recreational resources should be undertaken to update our knowledge of what exists in Mount Holly. This process would be a long-term process (years) and would begin by documenting what information already exists from all sources available. She emphasized that we need better information about past studies & reports (e.g. Arrowwood Inventory), maps, previous plans, and current uses of natural resources by different sectors of the community including youth, seniors, commercial, and recreational users. Further, she explained that information about the locations of stone walls, building foundations, etc. would provide good indications of past resource use and potentials for future conservation and uses. Annette proposed that we form an inventory sub-committee that could begin organizing this effort and initiate the long-term project.

P. Crane suggested that the inventory should include individuals beyond the MHCC so we don't overlook important features. F. DeVine felt that the inventory should also consider needs of the Mount Holly Planning Commission (MHPC).

It was agreed that Nicole Lewis (former member of the MHPC), Fred Garrow, and Phil Crane would contact the MHPC to determine their needs regarding an inventory of resources. Jon McCann (Chair, MHPC) supported the involvement of the broader community in the inventory. He thought the effort should begin with a very broad scope to determine what is already know and then could focus on issues that need more in-depth study where needed. He gave the example of needing better specific

information about the location of vernal pools. J. Corven added that this is where the data from the iNaturalist Biodiversity Project will help determine where special habitats exist by documenting species abundances.

An Inventory working group was formed including A. Lynch, F. Garrow, and P. Leonard.

J. Corven gave a brief review of the previously presented proposal to partner with the Mount Holly Conservation Trust (MHCT) **iNaturalist Biodiversity Project** to study and inventory the biodiversity of Mount Holly. A one-page written summary of the proposed project was requested at the last meeting and had been circulated to MHCC members for comments. The project has been established online (<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/mount-holly-biodiversity>) with support of the MHCT and announced in the Chit Chat and on Newsflash. To date over 550 species have already been identified by 93 observers in Mount Holly and 20 people have specifically joined the project online. Distribution of the plant and animal submissions indicate where most people go to see nature and are beginning to suggest where particular habitats exist. The map also indicates where more information is needed (e.g. Star Lake). N. Lewis stated that she had mentioned this project at school and found interest with some Mount Holly school staff and felt it could be an excellent initiative to get students and teachers involved.

F. DeVine moved that the MHCC should support the iNaturalist project, seconded by _____ . Passed by 7 in favor, 1 opposed.

P. Leonard of the Star Lake sub-committee reported that he was finishing up the **Star Lake grant application** to the Dept. of Environmental Conservation Watershed Grants program which is due by February 5. He requested that the Chair request a letter of support from the Select Board to accompany the application.

P. Crane provided an update on the development of a grant proposal for a **town shade tree plan**. The concept was raised during the last Select Board meeting and interest was expressed by P. Crane and Brigid Sullivan (MHCT). They will complete and submit the application to the Vermont Urban and Community Forestry program. A similar grant had been received by Mount Holly and trees were planted around the Belmont Green and nearby streets a few years ago.

Action Items

- Confirm survey instrument and timeline for the town survey. (F. DeVine & Survey sub-committee)
- Prepare a town inventory plan to present to the MHCC in April. (A. Lynch & Inventory sub-committee)
- Add the MHCC to the descriptions of the Mount Holly Biodiversity project. (J. Corven)
- Complete & submit the VT ANR Watershed Grant proposal. (P. Leonard & Star Lake sub-committee)
- Complete & submit Shade Tree Plan application to the VT Urban & Community Forestry program. (P. Crane)

Next Meeting

The next meeting of MHCC will be on Tuesday, March 2 at 7:00 pm via Zoom. The agenda will be provided by F. DeVine/P. Crane.

Adjournment

A. Lynch moved to adjourn, seconded by P. Crane. Adjourned at 8:13 pm.

Minutes recorded and submitted by Jim Corven, acting clerk.