

Mount Holly Conservation Commission (MHCC)

Meeting Minutes

July 6, 2021

Opening

The regular meeting of the Mount Holly Conservation Commission (MHCC) was called to order at 7:10 pm on July 6, 2021 via Zoom by Philippe Crane.

Present

Annette Lynch, Fra DeVine, Peter Smith, Philippe Crane, Philip Leonard, Jim Corven. (Fra and Jim were late arrivals.)

Approval of Agenda

The meeting agenda was accepted by consensus.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the previous two meetings (May 4 and June 1) were both approved.

Agenda Items

P. Crane provided a **Shade Tree Plan update**. He has volunteered, and been approved by the Select Board, to be the needed Tree Warden. Having a Tree Warden is a state requirement, and opens the way to making a plan. A MHCC subcommittee will be needed, and Phil asks commission members for input. One need is to identify trees growing on town rights of way and town property. Another is to ask property owners if they would like to see some of their trees included. A. Lynch asked that more information be provided to members concerning the agreement that is in place. Phil responded that he will send each of us a copy of the Letter of Agreement; he has now done so.

J. Corven, following the meeting, submitted an update regarding the **iNaturalist Biodiversity Project** (<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/mount-holly-biodiversity>) as follows:

Total **Observations** submitted: 2,204 (415 submitted since June)

Total **observers** participating: 127 (9 more than June)

Species reported: 786 (80 new since June)

Plants: 388 (42 new since June)

Insects: 193 (31 new since June)

Birds: 79 (2 new since June)

Fungi: 65 (4 new since June)

Mammals: 17 (same as June)

Threatened species reported: 21 (1 new since June)

Introduced species reported: 96 (23 new since June)

Several observers are now linked with the state wetlands mapping project so observations of wetland species are also contributing to that project. Further, iNaturalist includes an interactive map so it is possible to see where and when each observation was made in Mount Holly.

P. Leonard reported on his recent conversations regarding Star Lake with townspeople following the Fourth of July parade. A number of people expressed interest in bettering the lake's condition. Phil asked that the Commission consider what role the MHCC ought to play in such an effort. P. Crane said he thinks some members are interested in improving the recreational use of the lake. A. Lynch commented on prior support by other organizations; the Community Association, which had limited objectives, and the Conservation Trust, which was interested in issues with the dam replacement. She thinks Star Lake and its scenic and recreational benefits are part of our mandate, adding that we need a serious discussion of our role. P. Smith noted that the white pond lilies now thriving in Star Lake were introduced several years ago by a camp bordering the lake, and said that removing them would be a serious problem.

A. Lynch continued her discussion regarding inventory of town conservation assets. She mentioned phone conversations with Fra seeking to clarify two questions: Should we be continuing to amass data about the inventory categories? and What actions should we be involved with regarding inventory items? Regarding the second, she mentioned Core Forest Areas. These were addressed in the Arrowwood report; subsequently, the state has added "prevention of forest fragmentation" to the mandate of Conservation Commissions. The 2018 Town Plan agreed with this objective but did not address what should be done in regard to it. She raised the question of whether we want to take up this issue, or leave it aside and move on to other topics. She also mentioned the subject of Prime Agricultural Soils as a possible "test case", asking if 1 or 2 members would be willing to work on it prior to the next meeting. We could then proceed through a list of topics, ending up with "a cornucopia of information" on hand. She expressed some frustration about lack of progress on inventory efforts. Jim said we would profit from a template or some guidelines about how to address a given topic, giving as an example his interest in wetlands. Such tools would assist in our being able to distribute the effort to individuals or small teams. It was also agreed that Annette should not carry the burden of compiling the inventory and that the responsibility should be distributed amongst Commission members. The test case would provide the guidelines for how a commission member would go about collecting and developing this information.

F. DeVine spoke about the Survey and asked for input toward his planned reporting at next week's Select Board meeting. We discussed some of the highlights, and also the idea of doing follow-up surveying, possibly annually, to gather more data, encourage wider participation and establish trend lines in community opinion. P. Crane likes the idea, citing using the Chit Chat and the Mount Holly School PTO; J. Corven indicated a preference for beginning with students, then teachers and parents. The Commission agreed that Fra would let the Select Board know that we are reviewing the possibility of doing the survey annually.

should suggest to the Board a “next version” for the Survey.

Finally, we discussed Commission Procedures for communications, project information, and approvals. P. Crane asked for clarification of this agenda item. It is a matter of better understanding our limitations, purposes and procedures. A. Lynch expressed concern about a lack of sharing “front end” information, and about a need for us to act more as a body. Procedures will need develop as we go forward.

New Business No new business was introduced.

Action Items

- Select Board presentation by F. DeVine.
- Case Study progress by A. Lynch.
- Update on Tree Plan by P. Crane.
- More information about Star Lake by P. Leonard.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of MHCC will be on Tuesday, August 3 at 7:00 pm via Zoom. The agenda will be provided by F. DeVine/P. Crane.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned by consensus at 8:35 pm.

Minutes recorded and submitted by Phil Leonard, journeyman clerk.