

Mount Holly Conservation Commission (MHCC)

Meeting Minutes

May 4, 2021

Opening

The regular meeting of the Mount Holly Conservation Commission (MHCC) was called to order at 7:03 pm on May 4, 2021 via Zoom by Fra DeVine.

Present

Annette Lynch, Fra DeVine, Fred Garrow, Peter Smith, Philippe Crane, Philip Leonard, Jim Corven.
Guests: Rich Clark, Willow Hogan, Sky Hulser (Castleton University)

Approval of Agenda

F. DeVine moved, seconded by P. Crane, the agenda was accepted by consensus.

Approval of Minutes

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

Agenda Items

F. DeVine turned control to the Castleton guests for a **Town survey update**. This was a PowerPoint summary of the findings of the recently conducted survey, to which 124 town residents responded, 109 with fully completed surveys. Rich, Willow and Sky discussed details in a preliminary report titled "To Have and to Hold." MHCC members responded with questions and comments. A final report to the Commission will be prepared by Prof. Clark. The presentation, which was well received, included preliminary findings identifying most common outdoor activities (gardening, followed by walking/running), most favored scenic views (Healdville Road, followed by Maple Hill Road and Star Lake), and various activities (youth activities, educational walks) that respondents would like the town to encourage. Responses about solar panels, wind turbines and cell towers indicated consistency in response patterns. Despite a disappointingly low response rate, the survey contains valuable information. The MHCC will publicize survey results and will convey the final report to the Planning Commission.

P. Crane provided a **Shade Tree Plan update**. Nothing definitive has taken place, but there are candidates to be Tree Warden. Appointment of a warden is a gating factor in implementing a plan. P. Crane has initiated discussion with counterparts in Shrewsbury, where there is an experienced Tree Warden, with a view to beginning collaborative efforts.

J. Corven and F. Garrow contributed to a **Report on the Vernal Pool Trip** held on a recent Saturday. This was an introductory trip along the Station Road end of the snowmobile trail to pools (2 of some 100 monitored pools in Vermont) which Jim monitors. Fred reported his sons' favorable reaction to the walk. A future walk, now envisioned for May 15, will go into the newly conserved plot near Route

155 where we can observe ledge habitat, a vernal pool and a beaver pond all in the same outing. Future planning will take place for walks with a wider audience.

A. Lynch provided an abbreviated look at **Ledge Habitats, Core Forest and Riparian Forest Areas**. She first called attention to a map she had sent to members highlighting the roads of Mount Holly, and to three watershed maps contained in the 2008 Town Plan. She also referred to Vermont's 2018 statute regarding forest fragmentation. She suggested that we finish our Arrowwood discussion next time, with bear wetlands, successional forest areas, and the 10 Core Habitat Units (CHUs) identified in that report.

Following the meeting J. Corven submitted an update to May 11 regarding the **iNaturalist Biodiversity Project** (<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/mount-holly-biodiversity>) as follows:

Total contributing observers:	105
Total participating members:	35 (5 new since April 13)
Total observations submitted:	1,486 (130 new since April 13)
Total species identified:	628 (25 new since April 13)

Plant species:	306 (17 new)
Insect species:	140
Bird species:	74 (5 new)
Fungi species:	53
Mammal species	16

Introduced (non-native) plant species:	40
Introduced (non-native) insect species:	9
Threatened species:	18

In addition to compiling more data about the local biodiversity the project has also engaged people in observing the nature around us. This is a very significant factor in improving public awareness and, hopefully, interest in conservation.

New Business No new business was introduced.

Action Items

- Walk to observe pool, ledge and beaver pond.

- Summit on the Future of Vermont participation
- Review materials on bear wetlands, successional forest areas.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of MHCC will be on Tuesday, June 1 at 7:00 pm via Zoom. The agenda will be provided by F. DeVine/P. Crane.

Adjournment

A Lynch moved to adjourn, seconded by J. Corven. Adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Minutes recorded and submitted by Phil Leonard, apprentice clerk.