

Mount Holly Conservation Commission (MHCC)

Meeting Minutes

September 7, 2021

Opening

The regular meeting of the Mount Holly Conservation Commission (MHCC) was called to order at 7:10 pm on September 7, 2021 by Fra DeVine. It was held in the Community Room with some attendees joining via Zoom. (This was the first MHCC meeting to have an in-person component.)

Present

Annette Lynch, Fra DeVine, Peter Smith, Philippe Crane, Philip Leonard, Jim Corven, Fred Garrow.
Guests: Ron Unterman, Jessie and Ryan Metcalf.

Approval of Agenda

The meeting agenda was accepted by consensus.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the previous meeting (July 6) were approved. (Moved by Jim Corven, seconded by Annette Lynch.)

Agenda Items

Fra DeVine read his summary of the Commission's first year activities and accomplishments and asked for input as he prepares to present it to the Select Board.

P. Crane provided a **Shade Tree Plan update**. He indicated that a group to make a shade inventory is in place and has met. It will not operate as an official town body. Its first job will be an inventory with clear specifications regarding trees along roadways. This will include only class 2 and selected class 3 roads in Mount Holly. There will be a meeting with a presentation by Joanne Garton from the VT Urban and Community Forest Program regarding this on Thursday, September 16 at 10:30 in the Community room. Philippe expects to have a plan prepared prior to the March 22 deadline specified in the Shade Tree grant. He mentioned the importance of a later inventory of ash trees.

.J. Corven gave an update regarding the **iNaturalist Biodiversity Project**

(<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/mount-holly-biodiversity>). In addition to providing numerical data, he noted that there is a need for more observations, particularly for the area around Star Lake, but also for the Okemo State Forest. (Several observers submit information from the Lake Ninevah area.) Jim mentioned that he likes the iNaturalist software, and spoke about another package as well. The app is called "Seek" and it is free on Google Play Store or Apple Store. Seek is based on the same iNaturalist program but offers easier identifications and has game-like challenges to encourage usage, especially by younger and non-technical users. It can be linked with the Biodiversity Project so observations get automatically recorded in the town project. Fra asked him to submit some information for the *Chit Chat* and to communicate with the school. Fra asked if observations had led to any surprising findings.

P. Leonard reported on further conversations he has had with townspeople regarding Star Lake, and indicated that he is closer to understanding needs and possible interventions. Jim asked him to check with the town health officer about the status of testing for coliform bacteria. Fra mentioned a conversation with Becky Woodward at the recent Vermont Fair in Ludlow, and indicated that Brigid Sullivan has her State of Vermont contact information. Further conversation included Peter Smith's recollection of water skiing on Star Lake, and the need for additional information (background, state resources, roles of Select Board and health officer) regarding testing and reporting of water testing.

A. Lynch provided a detailed look at an example (mast stands) of how to update using information from the Arrowwood inventory from 2008 by using internet resources. Results from the report can be compared to current state data, which has maps detailed down to the parcel level, in order to determine changes that have occurred in the past 13 years. [This portion of the meeting was not well transmitted to Zoom attendees, with the result that detailed notes on the presentation are not available.] Discussion involved breaking the work so that small teams could develop experience by tackling individual topic areas (mast stands or core forest areas, for example) and plotting changes according to procedures outlined by A. Lynch. See **Action Items** below for team assignments made at the meeting.

The Commission decided to Table until the October meeting the agenda item(s) related to structure, officers, and general organizational issues.

Other Business

J. Corven suggested two things he would like to see publicized. The first was a half-page monthly report from the MHCC to provide updates to townspeople about our activities. The second was the progress, and report on conservation measures taken, during the construction of the cell tower above Stewart Road South. No action was taken on these items.

Action Items

- Inventory Teams (Mast Stands – R. Metcalf, J. Corven; Deer Wintering - P. Smith, P. Leonard; Core Forest - F. DeVine, F. Garrow, A. Lynch) to begin work.
- F. DeVine to share report with Select Board.
- Tree Plan presentation on September 16.
- Proposed Star Lake actions by P. Leonard

Next Meeting

The next meeting of MHCC will be on Tuesday, October 5 at 7:00 pm via Zoom. The agenda will be provided by F. DeVine/P. Crane.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned by vote at 8:41 pm.

Minutes recorded and submitted by Phil Leonard, clerk.