

# Mount Holly Conservation Commission (MHCC)

## Meeting Minutes

October 5, 2021

### Opening

The Annual Meeting of the Mount Holly Conservation Commission (MHCC) was called to order at 7:03 pm on October 5, 2021 by Fra DeVine in the Mount Holly Town Office.

### Present

Annette Lynch, Fra DeVine, Philippe Crane, David Martin, Fred Garrow (via Zoom), & Jim Corven.  
Guests: Steven Michel

### Approval of Agenda

P. Crane moved, seconded by A. Lynch, the agenda was accepted by unanimously.

### Approval of Minutes

J. Corven moved to accept the minutes, seconded by A. Lynch, approved unanimously.

### Open Issues

F. DeVine raised the issue that some of our **Policy & Procedure** (By-Laws) document needs to be reviewed and may need revisions before we hold officer elections at this meeting. J. Corven proposed that a sub-committee be formed to address any needed revisions and that only the two items regarding membership size and statute specified officers be addressed at this meeting. A. Lynch and J. Corven agreed to review the by-laws and provide a draft of revisions for the next meeting. F. DeVine suggested that the membership be set according to the statutes (min. 3 to maximum 9). It was accepted by consensus to make this recommendation to the Selectboard.

**Election of Officers.** F. DeVine stated that he was only willing to serve as a co-chair, not as a single chair, as seems to be specified by the statute. It was agreed to seek legal advice as to whether the statute statement that conservation commissions “shall elect a chair...” restricts us to a single chair or whether co-chairs or a vice-chair are allowed. J. Corven nominated A. Lynch as chair, and she was elected unanimously. P. Crane nominated P. Leonard as Clerk. J. Corven self-nominated as clerk. P. Leonard was elected Clerk by a vote of 3 to 2. No Treasurer was elected.

P. Crane reported on progress of the town **Shade Tree Plan**. On September 27 & 29, Gretchen Gregory and Phil Crane inventoried about a mile of Maple Hill Road on the western side toward Rt 155. This was a very revealing experience.

- 1.) It is reasonably time consuming and having two people makes things go rather more quickly. We spent about 3 hours each so a complete inventory would take about twice that although we were learning and this did slow us down
- 2.) We inventoried about 75 trees
- 3.) Roughly half the trees are in poor to fair condition.
- 4.) We included ash trees which will not qualify as “Shade Trees” since they will likely die within 4-6

years. Roughly a dozen trees.

5.) Many more of the older maples are candidates for pruning, fertilizing, etc. in order to increase their vitality and life span than we expected. This gives us an opportunity to write a cogent care plan in our preservation plan which includes planting new trees in specific places as well.

Future plans...

Clearly, completing the inventory of Maple Hill is needed before proceeding to the implementation of the preservation plan, but I think we should prioritize other areas in making our plan so we can understand the diversity of what should be included in our plan. I propose the Star Lake Recreational area, the roadside trees in the Mechanicsville Cemetery, and the trees on the effective Town green by the church. In order to avoid being too Belmont centered, we should also do another road or area in town across Rt 103, and suggestions are encouraged (requested!).

If any of you are interested, you can see what we did at the following website.

<https://vtanr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=833717b147924f58a80c50b1c1d2b535&%=20Public%20Tree%20Inventory=>

P. Leonard provided a written report of the **Star Lake initiative**. It follows in part: I have had email correspondence with a flock of DEC people and understand that, apart from cutting and raking vegetation by hand, any solution we might envision would require permitting. Moreover, for some possible interventions, obtaining a permit could be unlikely, as we are arguably (though not certainly) dealing not just with a lake but a Class II wetland. Paul Nevin has spoken with the Lake Ninevah people, and they would be willing to lend us the single bottom barrier that they have. I have also had suggestions about the use of pond dyes to retard growth of such things as algae, and about the use of a Diver Assisted Suction Harvester (DASH) – a pontoon boat fitted with suction equipment – as used by the Lake Rescue Association (LRA). Lake Rescue and Lake Pauline have had a strong program for controlling Eurasian watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*), an invasive plant also found in Star Lake. The results are good, and they have obtained some grant support, but there is a cost; the LRA spends nearly \$80K per year on this. They spent \$25K acquiring and outfitting the DASH used to harvest weeds.

Recent local efforts have been limited to cutting and raking efforts by an informal group of volunteers. We need to retain and develop such efforts, as they do make some difference. However, they are clearly not enough. What should we do?

In my opinion, we should move first toward a stronger effort to control weeds in the beach and boat access (BBA) areas at the spillway end of the lake. This could focus either on a small area, or a slightly larger one that I think of as the “Appendix” (APP) of Star Lake. Methods would include cutting and raking together with permit-requiring things such as food dyes, bottom barriers, divers and suction harvesting. I can offer more detail about what I mean about this.

As important as actual removal is the development of an expanded cadre of people willing to take part in the actual work, or in its support. One focus should be to engage MANY more people under the age of 65, as efforts need to be applied on a sustained basis.

A. Lynch provided an update of progress made on the town **natural resource inventory**. She and F. DeVine completed preliminary work on the Core Forest sector and described their experience and technical issues (map sizes & scales, detail, etc.) with completing the process. A. Lynch has made an inquiry to Michael Lew-Smith of Arrowwood regarding procedures and will provide further guidance to the working groups who will do the Mast Stands and Deer Wintering areas. It was agreed to include the inventory work by Brett Engstrom for the Ninevah Foundation in 2018 in the town inventory. D. Martin offered to help acquire the relevant information and reports. A. Lynch agreed to seek further sources for larger maps to facilitate the inventory work. F. Devine offered to help the other two sector groups get started by meeting with them to show what was learned about the process and how to analyze maps for changes.

Following a discussion regarding possible **federal funds** becoming available for the town it was agreed that the MHCC should provide recommendations to the Selectboard regarding priorities and specific projects for the town to consider. Star Lake water quality and ecological issues were one priority suggested.

### **New Business**

J. Corven announced that there is now extensive information in printed materials (pamphlets, wallet cards, specimens, etc.) regarding invasive species (Emerald Ash Borer, Asian Longhorn Beetle, Spotted Lantern Fly, etc.) available for public outreach. Materials will be available at the MHCT table during Cider Days and can be distributed elsewhere.

### **Action Items**

- Review & present a draft revision of the MHCC Policy & Procedure document to members of the CC before next meeting. (A. Lynch, J. Corven)
- Acquire legal advice regarding the election of Chair(s). (A. Lynch)
- Request and disseminate information about inventory procedures. (A. Lynch)
- Acquire reports and information regarding the Ninevah Foundation inventory. (D. Martin)
- Provide 2 sources of information for better maps to inventory groups. (A. Lynch)
- Assist inventory working groups (Deer Wintering & Mast Stands) with analysis procedure. (F. DeVine)
- Prepare preliminary project recommendations on federally funded town projects. (A. Lynch, F. DeVine)

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting of MHCC will be on Tuesday, November 2 at 7:00 pm. The agenda will be provided by A. Lynch.

**Adjournment**

A. Lynch moved to adjourn, seconded by P. Crane. Adjourned at 8:25 pm.

Minutes recorded by Jim Corven and submitted by Phil Leonard, clerk.