

Mount Holly Conservation Commission (MHCC)

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 7, 2023

Opening

The February regular meeting of the Mount Holly Conservation Commission (MHCC) was called to order at 7:06 pm on Tuesday, March 7, 2023 by Phil Crane. It was held beneath the Library.

Present

Fra DeVine, David Martin, Peter Smith, Jeanmarie Fitzgerald, Phil Crane, Sue Presson, Phil Leonard, Jim Corven.

Approval of Agenda

The meeting agenda was approved, with ChitChat moved to last position under Ongoing Programs.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the February 7, 2023 meeting were approved as submitted; moved by Fra, seconded by Dave and unanimously approved.

Ongoing Programs (6)

Phil L. distributed a document titled *Thoughts on Star Lake* (see Addendum below) developed in conjunction with Jean. It includes 8 points beginning “We should...” and ranging from conducting a plant survey to participating in state programs that train volunteers to raising the issue of what we need to know if future work on **Star Lake** should reveal septic issues affecting the lake. Phil, Jean and others contributed to the discussion.

Jim updated numbers on **Biodiversity**, including recording of one new species in Mount Holly. He mentioned the alarming rate of species extinction in present times. He also brought up that fields and meadows, not just forests, are important to biodiversity. Mow in October!

Fra spoke about including maps on the Mount Holly web site. He also said he contacted Michael Lew-Smith of Arrowwood Environmental about obtaining updates to their earlier **Inventories**. These would be costly, but less so as updates rather than as studies from first principles. Fra indicated \$10K as a cost figure, and said he would contact Jon McCann of the Planning Commission about updates.

Dave indicated that there is not much response from the community regarding **Recreation**. We discussed the question of liability for activities such as hikes that the MHCC might conduct. When the Mount Holly School does trips, they ask participants to sign waivers. Apparently, the town has insurance that would cover such MHCC activities run by volunteers.

Phil C. proposed that we acquire 3-6 dozen injectors, together with the needed chemicals, so that we can offer property owners inoculation of trees against the **emerald ash borer**. He estimates about \$3K

as an initial outlay for this, with property owners paying costs when their trees are treated. He plans to take a proposal about this to the next Select Board meeting.

There was conversation about the nature of a **ChitChat** article for April. Sue has talked earlier in the meeting about the information about Star Lake contained in the email from Olin Reed to Jean and Phil L., and likes the idea of making some of its contents available to the community. She and Jean discussed aspects of this. Jim mentioned that he has “best practices” material that he could share. The discussion did not arrive at a sharp outline for the next article; work will need to take place in a less formal manner prior to the deadline for submission.

Other Business

Jim Corven talked about public outreach activities. He sees them as making our work easier by building public awareness. He mentioned that the Mount Holly School is keen on using iNaturalist as part of its after school program. He suggested our getting summer speakers, perhaps discussing the ecology of Star Lake. The Tiny Grant we received would help with that.

Action Items

- Chit Chat: Sue and others to look at writing about Star Lake.
- Star Lake: Phil L. and Jean to continue pursue State and local contacts.
- Phil C. to take ash borer inoculation ideas to Select Board.
- MHCC should invite Jon McCann to brief us about ARPA discussions and to talk about inventory updates.
- Jim to continue exploring the possibility of iNaturalist education at Mount Holly School.

Next meeting

The next regular scheduled meeting of the MHCC will be on Tuesday, April 4, 2023, at 7:00 pm. The agenda will be provided in advance. It is likely to be “unofficial” as a quorum is unlikely because of members’ travel plans.

Adjournment

As members indicated no further items, Phil Crane declared the meeting adjourned at 8:29 pm.

Minutes recorded and submitted by Phil Leonard, clerk.

Addendum: Thoughts on Star Lake

March 7, 2023

1. We should do a plant survey. This will enhance much of what we do, including seeking funding for improvements. This could be “official” and professional, or conducted by qualified lay volunteers.
2. We should revive Friends of Star Lake, whether it lives as an independent 501 (c) 3 or is embedded in another organization.
3. We should work closely with Kelly Beerman, who is interested in many things, including a regional approach to watershed related efforts.
4. We should plug in to two state programs, Lake Wise which deals with training and assistance regarding shoreline management, and VIP which offers training for volunteers to monitor and help remove invasive plants.
5. We should include the MH planning commission for future Star Lake projects to meet DEC Shoreland Protection Act (2014) guidelines.
6. We should circulate VT DEC information so that community members now more about how the state regards Star Lake and its ecology.
7. We should write a Best Practices article in Chit Chat and include plant sale link through Rutland Natural Resources Conservation District for discounted plant material. Sale orders taken through March.
8. We should investigate some “What if?” questions to do with what should be done in case surveys and other work reveal septic issues affecting Star Lake.