

Mount Holly Conservation Commission

Meeting Minutes

September 5, 2023

Opening

The May regular meeting of the Mount Holly Conservation Commission was called to order at 7:05 pm on September 5, 2023 by Phil Crane. It was held in the Historical Museum parlor.

Present

In person: David Martin, Peter Smith, Jeanmarie Fitzgerald, Phil Crane, Sue Presson, Phil Leonard, Jim Corven.

Approval of Agenda

The meeting agenda was discussed and approved. We had anticipated having Jon McCann as a guest, but this has been postponed.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the July 5, 2023 meeting were approved as submitted.

Treasurer's Report

Fra being absent, there was no treasurer's report considered at this meeting.

Organizational items

Because of an increased intensity at the Weston Playhouse and within his family, Fra DeVine wishes to resign from the Conservation Commission. Phil C. will contact Fra about submitting a letter to the Select Board. The resignation raises three issues. The first is a possible replacement. We discussed possible names (Jay Ummel, Nicole Griffin, Paul Frazier) for consideration. The second is finding someone to assume the role of Treasurer, and the third concerns the responsibility of coordinating the updating of inventories. The latter is important as, absent zoning, a strong Town Plan has effect on subdivision and related practices. Members should keep these issues under consideration.

Belmont Village Plan

Dave led a discussion of the recent public meeting regarding the Belmont Village Plan. Jim said the meeting had been well presented. He suggested that there ought to be consideration of sewage removal systems that are not water-based, e.g., composting systems.

Star Lake

Jean talked about taking on the recently undertaken activities aimed at mitigating the phragmites outbreak along the Lake Street embankment. She asked about using some of the MHCC budget to purchase plants to compete with the invasive plants. Finding a source of these might be tricky; but perhaps Ed Smith (on Shunpike) might be able to help.

Phil talked about a Star Lake presence at Cider Days. The Community Association made an offer of a table, the "new group" has expressed great interest, and the Tiny Grant can cover any expense. Phil will continue working to pull this together.

Other topics about Star Lake were discussed, including water testing, the status of the “dry hydrants” along Lake Street. Finally, Phil brought up the need to begin moving toward **mechanical harvesting** as part of a maintenance plan for Star Lake. Steps toward this would include mentioning this to the Select Board, and contacting Jon McCann about its being incorporated into the Town Plan and related planning documents.

Biodiversity

Jim gave a summary update and has added cumulative numbers over the life of the project as of 9/6/2023 by email after the meeting: 4,050 submitted observations by 221 observers have identified a total of 1,127 species of plants, animals, and fungi in Mount Holly. The total includes, 74 new species since June (mostly plants, insects, & fungi), 505 plant species, 324 insect species, 122 fungi species, 90 bird species, 25 mammal species, 56 Introduced (non-native) species, and 31 threatened species. Jim indicated that the South Mountain area in Mount Holly is lacking in observations.

Ash Tree Protection

Dave said that the emerald ash borer seems to be slow in its advance through Vermont. Treatment is available but, given the lateness in the season, owners might want to wait until spring before having their trees treated.

ChitChat

Sue will await input for an October article.

Action Items

- Phil C. and members to generate ideas for a new member, a treasurer, and an inventories person.
- Star Lake: Phil L. and Jean to continue weeding, and to plan for Cider Days.
- Phil C. to speak to Select Board about membership issues, water testing, mechanical harvesting and the ash trees program.
- Fra to furnish a Treasurer’s Report and a summary of Inventories update.
- Sue to work on Chit Chat materials.

Next meeting

The next regular scheduled meeting of the MHCC will be held on Tuesday, October 3, at 7 pm.

Adjournment

As members indicated no further items, Phil Crane declared the meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Minutes recorded and submitted by Phil Leonard, clerk.