

West Fairlee Conservation Commission

Approved Minutes – Meeting May 26, 2015

Attending: John Boutin, Fred Cook, Geoffrey Gardner, Ann Stephens, Jim Totin, Rebecca Wurdak

The meeting began at 7:05 PM.

1. Minutes: It was moved, seconded and passed unanimously to approve as amended the minutes of the Commission's meeting of January 27, 2015. It was moved, seconded and passed unanimously to approve as amended the minutes of the Commission's meeting of April 28, 2015.

2. Treasurer's Report: No Treasurer's report was available.

3. Junk Removal From the Ompompanoosuc in the Vicinity of the School: John and Geoff reported on recent communications about the clean-up project with Julie Foley, Wetlands Specialist with DEC and Sacha Pealer, Central Vermont Floodplain Manager. The issues are 1) whether this work would require an Allowed Use Wetland Permit since the area appears to be a class II wetland on the map and 2) whether a permit would be required for the work as a "development project" under NFIP regulations because the six inches of topsoil suggested by Buzz Surwillo to cover any remaining small debris might be considered to fall into the class of "grading and filling." A flood hazard zone permitting process seems not only onerous given the scope and purpose of the project, but it poses a significant problem since the permit process and required hearing would be at the discretion of the Board of Appeal, a sub-group of the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission now has only two members. One of these two members, Geoff Gardner would have to recuse himself from this process because he is also a member of the Conservation Commission and has already voted in favor of this project going forward and has discussed it publicly with members of the Selectboard.

The interim solution or next steps will be for John to give Sacha Pealer the clearest possible description of the nature of the area, its dimensions, the scope of work and the purpose of the six inches of topsoil applied at the end of the removal of the junk. John will also seek to find a date when he, Sacha, Julie Foley, Jonathan Blake and Peggy Willey, as well as any other interested persons, can meet at the site to discuss this project and the best way to handle it for the health and stability of the floodplain, the river, the wetland and the children who play in proximity to the site.

4. Ompompanoosuc Monitoring: The proposed dates for the training are June 8, 9 or 10. The two monitors attending this meeting, John and Rebecca, preferred Monday, June 8. Rebecca will work with Paul Modern and John will work with Peggy. The training session will begin at 6 AM in the Community Building. Actual testing will begin the following Monday, June 15. Ann asked whether additional samples could be taken and frozen as a control for river testing being done in New Jersey. The person who asked for this would pick the frozen samples up from Ann.

5. Brushwood Forest Trail Planning: There was a discussion about the need for plotting out trail work that needs to be done in Brushwood Community Forest and a schedule for doing it. The three major items long discussed and little acted on are 1) removing as few trees as possible to clear the Presidential view in Brushwood South; 2) clearing and marking for the public the hiking trail laid out by Guy Wilson in Brushwood North and 3) setting a clear schedule for annual or semiannual cleaning up and clearing Brushwood trails to keep them useable and attractive to the public. It was moved seconded and passed to prioritize these three projects in this order: 1) Begin now to work toward clearing the Presidential view; 2) clear, clearly mark and map the trail in North Brushwood this fall; 3) by late next winter have a schedule for trail maintenance so it can begin as early in the spring as possible. Ann will contact County Forester David Paganelli to arrange a visit to the view site as soon as possible with Commission members to identify the trees that would have to come down, to discuss whether this meets with requirements of the Stewardship Plan, the scope of the work required and how to get it done and what to do with the wood once the trees are down.

6. Cooperation with Friends of Fairlee Forest: Geoff offered a brief report on the progress the Friends of Fairlee Forest have made in working with the Fairlee Town Forest Board toward better

management and conservation practice in the Fairlee Town Forest. Friends of Fairlee Forest recently started a website full of worthwhile information about the forest. The group's founder, Lynne Fitzhugh asked the Commission's permission to post Brett Engstrom's technical report on Brushwood Forest's South Wetland. We responded enthusiastically that no permission was needed since the report is a public document. It serves as an excellent introduction to the area and its ecology and we are glad to partner with the Fairlee group in this way. Another possible joint project with the group would be a trail up Bald Top beginning in Brushwood Community Forest and continuing into the Fairlee Town Forest. Frank Stephens has laid out such a trail. The joint project would be to mark it permanently and map it.

7. Wild Chervil: Wild Chervil is just now beginning to flower throughout the region and in West Fairlee. Geoff will again post his notices about the problems this plant poses both on the town listserv and to the Friends of Brushwood list. This year's notice will more aggressively urge people to pull Chervil wherever it is growing on or near their property and to organize with neighbors to do the same. Geoff and Ann have committed to pulling all they can along Bloodbrook Road from Brushwood Road to Wild Hill Road. Peggy has committed to doing the same along Wild Hill Road. Geoff and Peggy will return to West Fairlee Center to pull out the Chervil where they worked last year from the Church down the road some 150 yards. Areas where this potentially disruptive and destructive invasive has been pulled over the past few years are definitely showing much less of the plant than earlier. The last week before the plants set seed, Commission members will cut down as many of the plants as they can to limit as much new propagation as possible.

8. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 8:45.

*WFCC Meeting June 23rd, 2015
Agenda*

Next Meeting: July 28th, 2015

New Business-? anything to add to agenda below ; visitors

NOTE: Summer schedule: meet in WFCtr on MiddleBrook at Clubhouse in summer months

Secretary's Report-Geoff

Treasurer's Report-Geoff

Lake, Stream, River Projects-September is VT River Cleanup month

Pompy water sampling- (John, Rebs, Peg)

Westshire streamside dump update; -John B-

Lakes & Ponds Meeting- what happened that was interesting-Peg

Geer Dam update if any-Peg

Brushwood-

STZ -

Trail task update- scheduling Dave Pag & Presidential-Ann

Connectivity Projects: update from Lynne F. of Friends of Fairlee Forest-

Education-

Chervil management- campaign for now and next winter ; tandem with CC neighbors

Upcoming public education slated for Fall- Rebecca-Bridget Butler, Leif Richardson

Conservation Projects-

Fundraising -subcommittee-shall we make date with Patricia C for this summer sometime?

Britton

Maps/ Technical- big new one of Basin 14 (ours)- given to us by Jim Ryan

Save The Date!-any to share?

Ahead-

AUTUMN-

trail blaze and mark Guy's trail in Brushwood North; post signs for gate entrances

2 Education events-

What else???