

CONSERVATION & TRAILS COMMITTEE (CTC)
Essex Town Offices, 81 Main St., Essex Junction, Vermont 05452

Draft minutes Tuesday 9/13/2022

Members Attending: Alan Botula, Chair; Mike Spaeder, Vice Chair; Rusty Brink; Lauren Gaffney Cohen; Erin De Vries; Steve Dowd; Shannon Jackson; Ken Signorello;

Members Absent: Betsy Dunn, Clerk

Staff Present: Darren Schibler, Town Planner

Members of the public: Jean McBride, The Essex Reporter

Meeting called to order at 6:34 PM by Botula. Schibler noted that Dunn was absent and a substitute minutes-taker would be needed; Dowd volunteered.

AGENDA ITEM 1: Agenda Additions and Changes

Signorello proposed a motion to move item 4B to below agenda item 7. Jackson seconded the motion. The motion passed 8-0.

AGENDA ITEM 2: Public to Be Heard

There were no comments from the public.

AGENDA ITEM 4: Short Items

A. Minutes

Spaeder made a motion, seconded by Signorello, to approve the minutes of August 9, 2022 with the correction that Dunn was elected as Clerk, not Vice Chair. The motion passed 8-0.

B. Revised EAB Management Plan / Street Tree Activities for 2023

Selectboard approval for the plan will be considered in October. Signorello noted the reference to the use of shrubs vs trees. After discussion the committee agreed to remove this reference. After discussing, the CTC agreed to delete #4, sentence 3 regarding "an easement or deed restriction" and adapt the statement "to encourage" homeowner buy-in and participation in planting.

Spaeder made a motion, seconded by De Vries, to approve the revised EAB Management Plan memorandum and forward it to the Selectboard with the following changes:

- 1. Remove the last sentence of Recommendation 3.**
- 2. Modify the last two sentences of Recommendation 4 to read: "The Town would encourage the landowner to participate in planting and may consider planting larger trees if the landowner is willing to contribute the additional cost."**

AGENDA ITEM 5: Invasives at Indian Brook Park and Fall Clean-Up Day Preparation

Jackson reviewed the schedule and the plan. Dowd indicated prior event postings at parks, there rec. Dept., and the library, and De Vries commented on the Facebook event posting. Signorello questioned when to make the rain date declaration and Friday was agreed upon. Botula commented on the small buckthorn labeling. Spaeder offered to bring water and the key pickup plan was set.

Signorello asked whether non-residents could be offered season passes to Indian Brook in exchange for volunteering at the event; Schibler noted that this may be complicated by future changes to admission policies at the park and agreed it should be revisited later.

AGENDA ITEM 6: Development Review

A. 60 Colonel Page Road: 9-unit subdivision (sketch plan)

Schibler summarized the outcome of the Planning Commission meeting at which this proposal was reviewed, noting that the major discussion topics were the parcel's agricultural viability, the amount of clustering of development that was desirable to meet the goals of the Scenic Resource Preservation Overlay district, and details of a proposed public trail easement. Botula asked about the continued access to the trail network. The CTC had additional questions about individual house plot maintenance and use of the open space portions.

A. 1 LeClerc Woods: 8-unit Planned Unit Development (preliminary / final)

Schibler briefed the CTC on the project and highlighted two questions / concerns:

1. Whether to require the proposed 20-foot public trail easement along VT-289. Botula noted that given the challenging topography, perhaps the trail could be located along the existing LeClerc Woods road / access until it reached the property line.
2. Whether the proposed open space agreement (which would be held by the Town, not a land trust) required any changes.

Dowd asked about the VAST trail relocation. Botula asked about bike path easement and how to connect wetlands to the access.

De Vries had a question about the Planning Commission's role and suggested they update the technology of their plan presentation. As part of the application process when a plan is submitted, she proposed the use of Google maps (etc.) to allow for map overlays to properly orient the property.

Signorello noted the creative and innovative approach of the onsite water management, yet questioned the future oversight of the septic plan if it fails or isn't maintained.

B. 87 Pinecrest Drive

Schibler reviewed the proposal with the CTC and noted that the proposed community garden would likely need to be converted to some other form of common space since the developer is unable to provide water service to it. Schibler also noted the wooded buffer for neighbors.

Signorello questioned if the sidewalk width allowed for tree root growth and the tree canopy. DeVries called for a diversity of tree species. Botula and Signorello recommended that additional planting space be provided for the street trees on the south side of "Elsa Lane."

AGENDA ITEM 7: Work Plan Review

The CTC reviewed the status of projects on its 2022 Work Plan.

Forest Management Plan

Question of funding as to how to expand. Split Indian Brook into sections and log areas to open up understory growth.

Adopt-A-Tree

To get more involvement, Botula proposed staking new plantings to attract youth. Signorello asked about involving schools.

Trail Mapping

Update trail mapping and assessment forms. Jackson proposed dividing up the trails to get them assessed, Utilizing the committee members to commit to one, a trail a month. Schibler will send out forms on trail map assessment, and further discussion will take place at the October meeting.

Water Quality

DeVries has some plans as to how to move forward and called for putting the issue on the November agenda.

Conservation Fund

Botula and Brink will check back in on the Conservation Fund and working with the Rotary Club.

AGENDA ITEM 7: Reading File

No committee member comments were made during this section.

Brink made a motion, seconded by Dowd, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 8-0 at 9:10pm.

Draft minutes submitted by Steve Dowd and Darren Schibler, Town Planner