

CONSERVATION & TRAILS COMMITTEE (CTC)
Essex Town Office, 81 Main Street, Essex Junction, Vermont

Draft Minutes Tuesday 6/06/2023

Attending: Ken Signorelli, Betsy Dunn clerk, Shannon Jackson, Lauren Gaffney Cohen, Kent Johnson Town Planner, Rusty Brink, Alan Botula chair, Erin DeVries, Mike Spaeder Vice Chair

Absent: Chuck Viles Tree Warden, Steve Dowd,

Members of the public: April Petersen potential new member

Meeting called to order by Alan at 6:32 pm

Agenda Item 1. Agenda changes and approval

Ken would like to add as B recognition of public official. He made the motion and it was seconded by Alan vote 7/0

Agenda Item 2. Public Comments

None made

Agenda Item 3. Short Items

A. Adoption of minutes.

Ken had three minor changes to be made. The changes were unanimously accepted vote 8/0. The posted minutes were amended to add a new "B"

B. Recognition of a Public officials

Three of our members are not returning for another term, Alan, Mike, and Lauren. Members of the committee shared their feelings about their departure and on the contributions to the committee. All three will be missed greatly.

C. Arbor Day Conference report / impressions

Kent and **Ken** attended this meeting. They received 2 signs indicating the Town had achieved "Tree City USA". These will be placed as you enter the town on RT 15 by St Michael's College Colchester and on RT 15 as you enter the town Jericho. We also received a Flag that the committee would like to fly on the town's flagpole. **Ken** and attended 2 different breakout sessions. **Ken** went to the "invasives workshop". They reviewed the various invasive insects that are headed our way and methods of control. Beech trees are under attack. And the second workshop was "risk assessment". This concerned the ways to assess the forest for any impact by the invasive insects they walked around the area and reviewed how to assess for risks. **Kent** attended a workshop on funding issues. There are more federal dollars available to towns to plant

more trees in the urban areas in the USA. There are certain demographic considerations for access to the funds. We might be able to partner with other communities to help supply trees. Could we have a tree farm? This would increase our capacity for becoming a supplier. Funding could be a 1:1 match. For the federal dollars. Second workshop highlighted that we still need to explain why trees are important to us all. We must make the case that trees are a core part of the town's infrastructure. And therefore, they are aesthetically important and environmentally they protect the soil, provide shade and habitats. They are the character of the community. They are part of the standard for a community. They would like to see more of the younger generations involved. They would like to see us work with businesses in the community and nonprofits to help facilitate the work that is needed to accomplish these goals.

Ken wanted us to know that the "City" is using South Burlington's 'Branch out Burlington' to partner with for their tree farming. They planted 100 trees. **Kent** pointed out that in order to maintain the Tree City USA designation, we need to continue to celebrate Arbor Day, Tree policy, resolution for tree canopy. We need to get the grants 2\$ per capita to keep the honor of Tree City. And invasive species mitigation. **Erin** do we determine what tree care looks like? And, therefore, how the money is spent from the budget. **Alan** this was historically money spent for EAB mitigation. We need to work with staff, and we go out and get the contractors.

D. Pesticide applicator license

Betsy is working on the study guides for the test. The test is available every Thursday. You can take the test and if you fail the first time in 7 days you can retake it. If you fail that test you must wait 30 days to take it again. And if you fail that you must wait a year. I am studying. I plan on taking the test in July or August, to be ready for the application of the Buckthorn plaster. **Ken** wanted to know if anyone from Parks and Rec are also taking the test and the short answer is no. **Mike** reminded me that Mathieu Forest has a great deal of buckthorn to be removed. Once you pass, all you must do each year is supply the data that you have overseen applications and filled out the appropriate paperwork and submitted it to the state. And, of course, pay the yearly fee.

E. Parks and Recreation and Public Works support for trail connections

Alan asked if **Kent** if he has had any success for making trail connections. Two areas of concern are at Indian brook and at the Middle school. He thinks we need to talk with **Alli** and **Aaron** about these issues of easements. **Kent** has forwarded the email that **Alan** sent him and has yet to hear from either of them. This has been an open issue for over a year. If they don't want to work on it just tell us and we will go another route. We could take over for **Ali** regarding the trails and loop her in. Another reason to become a commission. The town had a grant to assess the stormwater coming into the forest and did it and they know what is needed. They to act before we lose the trails. **Ken** said we should make a priority list for areas in trails that need attention. **Betsy** will do that.

F. Act 171 working group update

Katherine is reviewing all of our work on Act 171. She has sent it off to Jens Hilke

G. 2024 Town Plan Working group update

Alan doesn't what the status is on the work group. **Ken** indicated that he was on it. Josh Knox from Planning commission has the collated list of the towns priorities that come from the meetings he organized throughout the town. Dusty, the chair of the Planning Commission(PC), has not received them as yet. Alan made an excel sheet for all of our committee to respond to regarding the priorities listed. "Town Action Plan" Alan will message the list and send it to the Josh. **Shannon** wanted to remind us that this is important. The town plan stands for 8 years and guides all the committees on how the residents want things done. **Ken** asked **Kent** if a draft has been made for the town Plan. He says not that he knows. So, if you haven't replied to the list please do so. Shannon thinks we need to move this forward. Alan will make a final draft and bring it to the next meeting. A link to the committee's shared drive will be given to all new members as soon as they start their term, in July.

H. Current use / Open lands contract integration status

Ken and **Erin** worked on this. He created an excel sheet for Current Use , Farm Contract, Land Contract. **Erin** researched Current us and Ken researched Open land and Farm Contract. Ken reviewed the requirements for each program. Any documentation that it required. They want to know how many landowners are in each of the programs. Question is can we combine any of the contracts? **Erin** explained that Farm to land has been around since 1993. Current use is a state program through Parks and recreation. Step one understand the 3 programs. Step 2 look at the overlaps and inconsistencies and propose changes. And possibly make changes to current use program. Find all parcels that can be in any of the programs in the town. Then see how many are in more than one program and the implications of that to the town regarding taxes. Erin reminded us that only 1-2 towns have the open land to farm programs. This has a great value to the town having it all so transparent.

Agenda Item 4. Business items

A. Town regulations for planting . Work plan item?

Betsy thought we needed to look at regulations and Zoning changes that might be made within the development review plan. Betsy thinks that we should start this topic with the new members. Kent will put in the work plan. We need to look at the current work plan Ken wants it on the next agenda s that we all can contribute to the plan.

B. Possibility of a tree nursery tree farm

Ken said so many of towns have their own tree farms. **Betsy** worked with him. We had a quick look around and then scheduled a meeting with Kent, Alli and Aaron to evaluate

the potential for creating a tree nursery on this parcel. Coincidentally there had been a nursery on the spot we showed them of ash trees. They are good for shade for the growing trees. The other issue is water source. **Aaron** pointed out to us that on the opposite side of the street there is a "Standpipe". This is a smaller version of a fire hydrant. **Aaron** thought we could bring it under the street and have a good source of water. It might cost in them 15K-20K to do it. **Kent** thought this might be available from a grant in the fall. The next key part for success is to a person solely responsible for the care of the tree farm. **Steve Dowd** says, yes, CTE would likely want in on this project. Once we are at capacity we could sell to developers in the town and to residents. Possibly have the town pay 60% and the town 40%. And this way we can have a lot of variety in the trees we grow. Currently we know there will be 170 ash trees that have to be removed. We can be sure to have the new owners in the Adopt a Tree program. Could tree warden preform this task as well? **Ken** brought up a map of the area under consideration for the nursery. Next steps Kent will do a cost /benefits assessment and Ken and Steve will pursue the issue of caretaker for the trees. The committee wanted to understand how the trees are planted Ken described the process. **Kent** thinks we look at 3 options: the Nursery, we just do as usual buy them; and last we partner with another town to grow our trees.

- C. Proposal to have approved CTC minutes automatically submitted to the selectboard reading file.** Ken makes a motion to have the approved minutes automatically sent to the Selectboard. Shannon seconded it discussion on timing ensued. Greg thought it was not a great idea. Too much reading for the board. Lauren thought we could put it in their packet. It just must be a final copy. Vote 8/0

Agenda Item 5 Reading File

- A. **Member comments.** Erin brought us up to date on the Riparian buffer project. She walked the Naylor rd. area with Chuck Vile. I'd like to have this on the next agenda. **Alan** says don't forget the tree inventory. The tree inventory may not be completely correct. We know what came down but not if all were replaced. **Kent** is going to meet with Darren regarding the next steps on this. Joann Garten was the person to put the inventory together. Several members want the various picture s taken this spring put into the reading file. Indian Brook clean-up, Arbor Day celebration. And the tree city sign once up.

Motion to adjourn by **Ken** at 8:12pm **Rusty** seconded. Vote 8/0