

CONSERVATION & TRAILS COMMITTEE (CTC)
Essex Town Offices, 81 Main St., Essex Junction, Vermont 05452
Minutes of Tuesday, November 09, 2021

In Attendance: Alan Botula chair, Betsy Dunn clerk, Shannon Jackson, Lauren Gaffney Cohen, Rusty Brink, Darren Schibler Town Planner and Chuck Vile Town Forester

Absent: Mike Spaeder, Casey Clark

Meeting was called to order at 6:36pm. Of note when there is no quorum <4 members present we can talk but no votes can take place. Lauren joined soon thereafter, constituting quorum (Rusty joined at 6:50pm).

Item 1: Public Comments: None

Item 2: Agenda – no changes

Item 3: Minutes were read, no changes were made

Item 4: EAB (Emerald Ash Borer)

Alan gave a presentation to the committee on the EAB that he plans to present to the Selectboard. In Lieu of asking for funds to combat the problem facing our Trees.

A. There are 200 trees belonging to the town, and with the EAB present in our community it was determined that an assessment was needed to be done to calculate the costs to the town in caring for these trees. A phased removal is being planned as well as treatment for trees that were assessed as being worth saving. Of note, the Ash tree is the predominant tree in Essex in the forest as well as on our streets. And they are not in good condition.

B. Proposed action: there are 13 trees worth saving with biennial treatments and 20-30 trees to be replaced prioritized by condition. As we replace a tree add it to the Adopt A Tree Program.

C. On Arbor Day new trees can be a part of the replacement as well

D. Some trees may genetically be able to withstand the EAB. This will be assessed on an ongoing basis. As many as 1-5% may achieve this ability.

E. There is also a grant available to the town that could be a source for new trees and care and maintenance from VT. UCF (Urban Community Forests). There are conditions to receiving the grant and the town must match their gift of 15,000\$ with 2500\$. Or an in-kind of staff time with a town staff member as the point person.

A motion by Betsy Dunn was made and seconded by Shannon Jackson to go after the grant. It was amended to say as long as someone on the committee commits to spear heading the effort. Betsy Dunn will be the grant writer with a lot of support. The vote was unanimous. If we are accepted the town would receive a Tree City the USA.

Item 5. Adopt A Tree

This is a public - private initiative. Town staff will have to administer the program. The citizens will be invited to become partners in the care and nurturing of the street trees. Anyone can participate. It would be most successful to choose a tree with which you have regular contact, such as one adjoining your property or in a location that you frequent regularly.

Residents would be asked to monitor the trees health, water or mulch as needed. Report issues or concerns to Essex Town staff. Residents. Would not be responsible for pruning, pesticide treatment, or dead limb removal. Remove watering bags or stakes on new trees. The resident adopting a tree would receive training on the care

The Town maintains a web site of trees in the Adopt-a-tree program. And as trees are planted the list will grow. The resident will receive a packet with supplies so that the family or persons caring for the tree can be identified.

Item 6. Strategic Planning.

We reviewed new and ongoing issues in our forests and with conservation. Members of the committee chose issues they were most interested in working on. . # 5 Shannon and Betsy will work on mapping of the towns trails and getting them onto the town's web site. # 10 Betsy, Mike and Chuck The trail caretakers program. Lauren will work on # 13 the management Plan for Saxon Hill. Rusty will work on # 14 The Conservation fund. # 18 Shannon and Betsy will Create a management plan for the Mathieu Forest, Horton and Unsworth property working with staff. #19 Lauren and Shannon will work on creating trails on RT 289. #20 Act 171. This is included in the town plan 2024and connectors. Looking at Wildlife Habitat and Unfragmented forest lands and their management to preserve them

Item 7. Development

We reviewed 2 new projects proposed. 1. Developments on Commonwealth and Carmicheal Streets. It will have to go through Act 250 scrutiny. It was noted that the green area is small and there is a need for landscaping. 2.The Gutema project on Towers Rd near Old stage Rd , a PUD of 4 duplexes and 3 houses . Concerns were crossing a class 2 wetlands and whether the project was clustered enough to be a PUD.

Item 8. The reading file

A need for an ordinance for harming or removal of tree owned by the town was discussed

At 9:36 motion to adjourn was made by Rusty and Betsy seconded it. It passed unanimously.

Minutes approved December 14, 2021