

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

Draft minutes Tuesday 12/14/2021

Members Attending: Alan Botula (Chair), Mike Spaeder (Vice Chair), Shannon Jackson, Lauren Gaffney Cohen, Betsy Dunn (Clerk)

Members Absent: Rusty Brink

Staff present: Darren Schibler

Members of the public: Erin DeVries, Zachary Sears

Meeting was called to order at 6:40PM by Alan

Agenda Item 1. Public to heard

Erin DeVries introduced herself as a candidate for the open position on the committee. And even if she is not selected she would like to work with us on Water issues she is a Water Ecologist

Zachary Sears spoke of his concerns regarding unleashed dogs in Indian Brook Park. He is greatly concerned that they are a menace to the public when off leash. They roam ahead of their owners and could be frightening to members of the public. He feels there is a safety issue to be considered as well as a liability to the town if someone is injured due to the unleashed dog. The committee discussed having a few days when dogs could be off leash. But the same issues would apply. Darren told Mr. Sears that he would follow up with Ally Vile at the towns Recreation Department And it would then come back to our committee for consideration.

Agenda Item 2. Agenda

No changes were made to the agenda

Agenda Item 3. Minutes

No corrections to the minutes were made and a motion to accept the minutes was made by Shannon Jackson and Seconded by Mike Spaeder. The motion passed 5-0.

Agenda Item 4. Grants

1. The Vermont Urban Communities Forests grant was submitted to the Selectboard. They agreed to support the measure and match any monies required for the match that remained after the in-kind money attributed to staff and volunteer time. The grant was then submitted to VTUCF. Darren indicates that we should know within a couple of months we will know if we get the grant.

2. There is a second grant available that we can apply for "Caring for the Canopy". This is due for submission by January 7, 2022. Darren recommends going for the grant Alan said he would write the grant.
3. The team discussed a need to contact nurseries for tree stock and pricing. When we remove the trees (20-30) that have been chosen, new trees will be needed. There is a potential that the contractors removing the trees will have a better source and wholesaler's discounts. This will require a RFP to be developed in January/February and selection of the contractor by March/April. We will plan to link this to our Adopt-A-Tree program.

Agenda Item 5. Trail Mapping

- A. Shannon is leading this endeavor the team consists of: Lauren, Mike and Betsy. We have reached out to Ali Biles at the town Recreation Department to co-manage this project. We have not heard back yet from her so Darren will reach out. A concern is that the meeting will be affected by the open meeting law as there are 4 members on the team. A decision to warn the meeting was made. Erin DeVries offered to contact the UVM Spatial Analysis Lab to ask for an intern with GIS and GPS experience to help with making the maps for our web site. This offer was gladly accepted. This would be during the spring semester. An issue was raised - some of the trails are on private lands requiring the owner to allow for an easement. Darren said he'd investigate this.
- B. Bike Paths. We reviewed Town Plan map number 8. This map indicates the areas of multi-use trails being considered for bikes and for connectivity of the town for biking. This effort will take several years to be completed. And grants will be needed as well to fund the project. Recent projects include new sidewalks on Pinecrest Drive and Towers Road; future projects include new or modified paths along Pearl Street between West St. Extension and Susie Wilson Road, and along Main Street between Athens Drive and VT-289. Trail construction projects would be included in management plans for town forests and recreation properties.

Agenda Item 6. Adopt-A-Tree

- A. We reviewed the timeline for this program. First, we need to have the Public Works, and Parks and Recreation departments on board. Darren said he would work on this.
- B. Second, we need to pick the specific trees that will be included. We all felt that this would be a direct outcome from the trees we remove in the spring or fall approximately 20-30 trees this first year.
- C. Third, we need to have the data base to capture all information required. Happily, there is a data base created by Pam Brangan at the Chittenden County Regional Planning commission that we can use. They did a tree inventory of Essex and created a dashboard that can be added onto to include links to specific

- diseases and pests associated with each tree species. Lauren said she would give it a trail run to see how easy it is to navigate.
- D. Fourth. The cost of the program. Potentially, we will require tree tags, tree bags, rocks and painting supplies. There will be administrative costs IT, Public Works. We can talk to Caitlin at the Essex Free Library if we could use their facility to paint the rocks which would decrease the cost. If we receive the UCF grant for training will have no extra cost to train those adopting the tree.
 - E. Target date Arbor Day, May 6, 2022

Spaeder left the meeting at approximately 8:05pm due to a prior obligation.

Agenda Item 7. Lymantria moths

Betsy received an email from Tanya Vyhovsky with a flier made by the state regarding these insects. We will put this flier out on Front Porch forum and on the town's web site. We will reach out to Ken Signorello who has contacts with the Sugarmakers' Association. The aim is to increase the public awareness of the issue and ask if they see any egg sacs to call the VT Forests, Parks, & Recreation department with the location. We are very appreciative of Tanya's efforts on our behalf

Agenda Item 8. Development Review

No new items to be reviewed; Schibler updated the CTC on the Planning Commission's decisions for projects previously discussed.

Agenda Item 9. Reading file

Of note, there are two positions open on the Northwest Regional Water Council.

At 8:30 a motion to adjourn was made by Lauren and seconded by Shannon. The motion passed 4-0.

Minutes approved January 11, 2022.