

Conservation & Trails Committee. (CTC)
Essex Town Office, 81 Main Street, Essex, Vermont

Approved Minutes- Tuesday 08/08/2023

Attending: Ken Signorello (Chair), Shannon Jackson (Vice Chair), Betsy Dunn, Erin DeVries, Steve Dowd, Morgan Kirk (Clerk), Bino Cummings (remote), April Petersen (left at 7:20PM), Kent Johnson, Chuck Vile (Town Forest Warden)

Absent: Rusty Brink

Members of the public: Sue Miyamoto, Luke Brockmeier, Jeffery Pelchat, Margarate Smith, Dawn Fleury.

Meeting called to order by Ken 6:30PM

1. Agenda changes and Approval: No change
2. Public Comments- For items not on the Agenda
 - a. Chuck Vile brought in a map of Saxon Hill forest plan when it was owned by Essex Jct. Has trees that were planted.
3. Adoption Of Minutes (Went out of order)
 - a. July 11th, 2023-Ken made suggested changes see approved minutes.
 - b. Betsy-Approved
 - c. Ken- seconds
 - d. Vote yes/no 8/0
4. Development Review
 - a. Colonial Page Rd- Planning Commission 2 days- Kent to put copy on google drive regarding 100 ft carbon sequestration defiant wide buffer space to connect "D" to "O".
5. Act 171 Working Group Presentation and Public Hearing and Adoption - Betsy
 - a. <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1mKtYWI-2n9eTt7CnluON7zTr57UcH4IOWATJWCV4-5A/edit>
 - b. Review of Act 171 Vermont Forest Integrity Law - Next plan due Jan 2024 (Every 8 yrs)
 - i. Darker areas on map are more important to protect. Connecting "D" with Large "O" block. Will focus on conserving Block "D" more
 - ii. Per governor our goal is to conserve 50% of Forest lands by 2050.
 - iii. Goal is to connect all towns to forest blocks and wildlife corridors.
 - iv. Margrete (Public) has concern for large trucks on 128 to route 15.
Betsy's response: our committee doesn't have a lot of power in control

of reconstruction to the rd, but we can create culverts for the animals to pass through.

- v. Jeff (Public): Has concern of how this project will be promoted. Betsy's response- This is step one for promotion, creating a town plan. We can present this again if requested.
- vi. Jeff also has concern how this will impact residents' use of personal land.
- vii. Ken's response: town plan will reflect zoning requirements.
- viii. Betsy: plans to talk with planning committee to suggest how subdivisions can be used to create a safe environment for animals to pass through
- ix. Steve's response to Jeff's concern: Town meeting is where we can promote this plan being put into place.
- x. Kent states: discussion will need to be had with the planning committee to consider how private use of land and public use of land should be implemented. Fully thought out pros and cons of how the land is utilized.
- xi. Erin suggested to Chair: If the public has suggestions to hear from the public to have their thoughts written down. (Audio broke up)
- xii. April had to leave meeting (7:20PM)
- xiii. Shannon: Comments that signs for animal crossings should be put up where "B" connects to "O". Betsy: agrees
- xiv. Members of the meeting divide into two separate groups and converse using Act 171 maps
- xv. Ken- reconnects meeting
- xvi. Kent- suggests combining the two variations of maps with Ken and Shannon in the next week

6. Adopt Town Plan Action Items CnT input to be sent to Planning Commission

- a. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1M5mz56TDOjhPAhn0q2v8Ma_B7iKsGrdb/view?usp=drivesdk
- b. Action 6.5: Stabilize stream banks, cultivate riparian buffers, and protect river corridors and roadside ditches in critical fluvial areas. Consider remote flood control in the next upgrade and repair of Indian Brook Dam to allow lowering levels in preparation and repair of absorbing and oncoming rain event.
 - i. Erin- proposed to put under water quality
 - ii. Shannon motioned to approve
 - iii. Vote yes 7/7
- c. Action 7.1: Deploy Conservation Fund to expand trail networks and preserve resources with high-value ecological significance.
 - i. Erin suggests current change to ecological
 - ii. Ken motions to approve

- iii. Betsy seconds
 - iv. Vote yes 6/6
 - v. Bino not present
- d. Action 7.2: Expand invasive species management plan, including mapping infestation and regular workshops for residents.
 - i. Erin- approves
 - ii. Betsy seconds
 - iii. Vote yes 6/6
 - iv. Bino not present
- e. Action 7.3: Maintain Street Tree Survey
 - i. Shannon- approves
 - ii. Betsy- Seconds
 - iii. Vote yes 7/0
- f. Action 7.4: Conduct public outreach and education to encourage tree planting where ash trees are lost and can not be replaced in the Town Right-of-Way.
 - i. Erin elects change
 - ii. Shannon- approves
 - iii. Bino- seconds
 - iv. Vote yes 7/7
- g. Action 7.5: Assess, monitor and address trails that are experiencing erosion due to storm water runoff and unstable stream banks.
 - i. Betsy- approves
 - ii. Erin- seconds
 - iii. Vote yes 7/7
- h. Action 7.6: Add to the Scenic-Resource-Protection-Overlay-District area such as portions of Brigham Hill Rd with scenic vistas
 - i. Betsy- approves
 - ii. Steve- seconds
 - iii. Vote yes 7/7
- i. NEW Action: Explore developing a tree nursery
 - i. Input 8:02PM-8:04PM**
- j. Action 8.1: Develop a forest management plan for Matthieu Town Forest. Institute a control and review process to ensure that all existing forest management plans are being implemented and followed.
 - i. Betsy- approves
 - ii. Shannon- seconds
 - iii. Vote yes 7/7
- k. Action 8.2: Undertake a review of existing State and Local land conservation and tax relief programs with the objective of consolidating, streamlining and promoting these programs.
 - i. Shannon- approves
 - ii. Ken- seconds

- iii. Vote yes 7/7
- l. Action 9.26: Improve trail maintenance on all town trails especially Indian Brook and Matthieu Town Forests
 - i. Steve suggests to connect Action 9.36 to Action 9.26
 - ii. Will connect with Chuck about trail maintenance and creation
 - iii. Steve- approves
 - iv. Shannon- seconds
 - v. Vote 7/7
- m. Action 9.27: Update trail maps and descriptions and make them available on the Town website. Investigate adding town trails to commonly used website trail applications.
 - i. Steve- approves
 - ii. Betsy- seconds
 - iii. Vote yes 7/7
- n. Action 9.32: Discuss new options for Pioneer Park with the City of Essex Junction and neighborhoods
 - i. Betsy- approves
 - ii. Morgan- Seconds
 - iii. Vote yes 7/7
- o. Action 9.34: Develop and improve trails off Freeman Woods Road and town owned land west of VT Route 289
 - i. Betsy- approves
 - ii. Shannon- seconds
 - iii. Vote yes 7/7
- p. Action 9.35: Document and enhance trails at Saxon Hill and EWSD parcel.
 - i. Bino- approves
 - ii. Steve- seconds
 - iii. Vote yes 7/7
- q. Action 9.36: Expand Volunteer Keepers program
 - i. Motioned to be removed
 - ii. Erin- approves
 - iii. Steve- seconds
 - iv. Vote yes 7/7
- r. Action 9.37: Improve public engagement in trail use, benefits and education
 - i. Motioned to be removed
 - ii. Ken- approves
 - iii. Steve- seconds
 - iv. Vote yes 7/7
- s. Action 9.38: Collaborate with nearby community trails committees.
 - i. Morgan- approves
 - ii. Betsy- seconds
 - iii. Vote yes 7/7

- t. NEW action: Complete plans for developing recreational opportunities for Saxon Hill Park to included but not limited to Pump track, ADA accessible trails to existing ponds, wintertime skating, and disc golf course.
 - i. Ken- approves
 - ii. Steve- seconds
 - iii. Vote yes 7/7
 - u. NEW Action: Research and develop a multi use path along and across VT289
 - i. New action suggested by Steve
 - 1. Alan Carnet from Vermont Land Trust website deals in parcels of land in 50, 60 and 100 acres
 - ii. Betsy- approves
 - iii. Shannon- seconds
 - iv. Vote yes 7/7
- 7. Vermont Land Trust Proposal- Steve
 - a. Talked about ***
 - i. Invasive species
 - ii. Preserving water ways and banks
- 8. Tree Nursery Update
 - a. Brian Jap doesn't need the barn to have electricity, he only needs it to store equipment in.
 - b. Kent will talk to Tom Yendo about more details regarding barn building project
- 9. Action to Explore Essex Request
 - a. Tammy Pitchell- is asking for our participation in explore Essex event at Foster Park on Town Community Day October 7th 2023
 - b. Betsy- plans to be there to represent
 - i. We have a tree flag for our booth
 - ii. We will brainstorm other promotions materials
 - c. Betsy- Approves
 - d. Bino- seconds
 - e. Vote yes 7/7
- 10. Fall Cleanup Day was mentioned to discuss a date and prioritized since it was a time sensitive matter.
 - a. Saturday October 21st
 - b. Rain day Saturday October 22nd
 - c. Ken- approved
 - d. Steve- seconds
 - e. Vote yes 7/7
- 11. Betsy moved to adjourn the meeting since it was extended an hour past the typical ending point.
 - a. Bino- approved
 - b. Betsy-send ones
 - c. Meeting adjourned 9:28PM

12. Rest of Agenda wasn't discussed

- a. Reading File and Committee Member COmments
 - i. Saxon Hill Forest Management Plan and three attachments
 - ii. Conservation and Trails COmmittee work plan
 - iii. Tree ID event
- b. Optional: Executive session