



BENNINGTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
August 19, 2021, 6:30 PM
Depot

Minutes

Meeting called to order at 6:32 PM

Present: Zach Allen, Tom James, Joe MacGregor, Jon Manley, Steve Willette, Mike Munhall and Christina Hahn (guest) **Absent:** Pat Long

MINUTES of June 17, 2021 Add Steve Willette to attendees - Approved

GUEST

- Jessica Rock - District Conservationist for US Dept of Agriculture Her visit has been postponed to a later meeting.
- Tom James introduced **Christina Hahn** who is interested in joining the Commission

REPORTS

- **River Committee** - Discussed the recent high river level. All bridges and dams appear to be in good order. The River Committee will be at the Hillsboro Living History this weekend to display the river shed diorama.
The River Committee is creating a master plan for the River that, when done, will become part of the Bennington Master Plan.
- **Membership** - Pat Long was approved by the Select Board to be a full member of the Commission.
 - **Christina Hahn** has been appointed as an alternate to the Conservation Commission.

OLD BUSINESS

- **4-H Forest Guides** - There were two tours with 4-H. The first was in the Forest with Jon, Zach and Mike. Jon did another tour with the 4-H on his property. The kids needed to find invasive species.
- **River Paddle** June 26 - debrief:

- Scout the River prior to the paddle to assess the ease of navigating the river
 - Prepare better for emergencies. Perhaps post numbers along the river to help first responders find the canoers.
 - Be sure to have a first aid kit
- **Depot Paint/Repairs** - Thanks were given to Joe MacGregor, Jon Manley and Mike Munhall for painting the interior of the Depot. They spent some 40 man hours prepping and painting the building.
 - The Commission is pleased to see that the Selectmen have apparently contracted Norm Mercier to paint the exterior over the next several months. Mike Young has been hired to rebuild the handicap ramp. Concerns were raised about the color the depot will be painted, the need for new doors and the removal of the old piano. The leak at the kitchen entrance. You Mike will contact the selectmen about these items.

Master Plan updates

- Water Quality - Zach will coordinate with Joe and Jon about getting the water testing equipment and finding the precise testing locations.
- Work with Planning on Commercial/Industrial areas - Mike had no update
- Land Use Change Tax - Joe had no update
- Rail Trail - Steve and Jon will develop a plan for a rail trail in Bennington and present it to the selectmen, DOT and Peter Leachman. Steve has been monitoring what other towns like Peterborough have been doing regarding rail trails. Steve and Jon will be meeting with Peter Leachman in coming weeks. At this time Leachman believes fixing the trestle will cost upwards of \$300,000. In discussions, liability insurance and who owns which portion of the track, right of way and trestle will be of concern.
- Alternate water sites - Jon had no update

NEW BUSINESS

- **Update on Whittemore Lake** Earlier this week, Keith Nason contacted Mike Munhall to inform him that the culvert blockage above Lake Whittemore was cleared by a local resident releasing a large quantity of foul water that flowed down across the boat landing at the Town beach and into the lake. The Town Emergency Management Group monitored the situation, contacted DES and NH Fish and Game. The all-clear was given.

- **Conservation Manuals** - it was requested that we get a copy of the NH Conservation Commission Manual for each member of the commission. Mike will follow up.
- Zach Allen - suggested that the property on Old Stagecoach Road be designated as a “Scientific Forest” to be used for research more than recreation.
 - **MOTION by Jon Manley, seconded by Joe MacGregor “The Conservation Commission requests the Board of Selectmen designate the property on Old Stagecoach Road between the two cemeteries as a “Town Forest” after the Board has obtained clear title to the parcel.”**
 - **Passed Unanimously**
- When we discuss new goals for 2022 in October the commission will make a Climate Plan for the Town to encourage the town to use the less impactful methods in town business.

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, September 16, 2021 @6:30PM

GOALS for 2021 *current status*

- Continuing to work to get the Board of Selectmen to commit to getting the depot restored and functional. ***Partially - painted interior***
- Continue to work on finding uses for the Old Stagecoach and Durgin Road properties.
- ***Find at least two new members to be on the Commission that would increase the diversity of the membership. Accomplished***
- Pursue grants to fund our projects.
- Tally town and current use properties to see what can be done to make them accessible to the public.
- Maintain what we currently have:
 - ***Work with Eagle Scout to complete his kiosk and plant tagging DONE***
 - ***Repair benches in the forest Accomplished***
- Do more educational outreach
- Perambulate the Deering townline.
- Work to get the trestle opened and explore a bike trail.