

Weston Conservation Commission

Minutes – September 1, 2022

Attending: Ken Hall, Don Hart, Marguerite Mason, Chris Morrow, Loretta Murphy

Public: None

Meeting Called to Order at 7:00PM

Requested Changes to the Agenda: none

Public Comment: None

Review of August 4 minutes: Clarified that Ms. Lynch attended via Zoom, Mr. Lindville was not at the meeting as a selectboard member, Packet of the VT Conservation Commission Handbook. Ms. Mason motioned. Mr. Hart seconded. Minutes were unanimously approved.

Comments from the Chair: This is a much different Conservation Commission than the one in place six months ago. That commission had eight seats filled, but two members stepped down before their terms expired. Two more members chose not to be reappointed when their terms did expire, and one more member stepped down at the end of July.

Among the reasons I asked to be appointed to the commission this spring were unaddressed tasks – assigned to the commission in the current Town Plan – and my belief that the commission can have a role in the upcoming re-write of that plan – an opportunity that only presents itself every eight years.

I also have an interest in the update of Weston's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan – which will involve the Conservation Commission – and I was at this table when possible plans for the Civilian Conservation Corps camp were first discussed in 2014.

Becoming Chair was not among the reasons I asked to be appointed to the commission but here we are. I appreciate and hope to keep your confidence.

Going through the record this spring, to understand what the commission had been doing and where things stood, it appeared to me that the Conservation Commission had strayed from the guidance provided by the enabling legislation, and that adherence to other statutes was lacking.

There are many things the Weston Conservation Commission can accomplish, but we must do so within the framework of the enabling legislation, Vermont's Open Meeting Law and Public Records Act. It's hard to go wrong if we stick to the statutes.

One thing the statutes require is that the commission adopt "such rules as it deems necessary and appropriate for the performance of its functions." Taking small bites, I

would like to see us create a set of bylaws and rules of procedure, a piece or two at a time, by the time Town Meeting rolls around. Knowing what we expect of ourselves can only be a good thing going forward.

The issues we tackle and the projects we take on will depend on a collaborative, group effort. That means open, honest communication and showing respect.

We don't have to agree with each other. We each have one vote.

We do, however, have to do what is best for the commission and the town.

As Chair, I would like to see a commission with members who are engaged and active, willing to work together as a whole or in groups, providing information and guidance to benefit the Town of Weston, its people and its resources. But I have only one vote.

Treasurer's Report:

- We have \$750 allocated from the Town. If we don't spend it by the end of the year it will go back to the Town.
- We have a Perry Neff Conservation Fund worth \$8,949.92. It is a rolling 91 day CD at Peoples Bank (M&T). APY .05%.
- Working to clarify things with the trustee of public funds, Mr. Clapp, to get updated information.
- There are no liabilities currently.
- There is a Town of Weston "Special Fund" with People's Bank worth \$314.21.

Bylaws/Rules of Procedure - Officers; Committees & Energy Committee:

Required by statute to have rules.

- Draft rules for Officers distributed for consideration.
- Mr. Hall moved to adopt the following rule. Mr. Hart seconded. Motion unanimously approved. "These rules shall be reviewed annually and may be amended by majority vote at the Commission's organizational meeting each spring."
- Discussion of the other draft rules for Officers.
- Decided to review draft rules for Officers at our leisure and vote at the October meeting.
- Draft Rules for Committees distributed for consideration.
- Draft Rules for Committees to be considered and voted on at the October meeting.
- Ad Hoc Energy Committee - discussion of role. Need for a Town Energy Plan to be able to access public funds and grants, and to allow the town to better manage future projects. The general goal is to 1) save the town money and to 2) build resilience at all levels of the town. Need to coordinate with the Planning Commission about current efforts and the impending town plan rewrite.
- Mr. Hall moved to make the energy group an "Ad Hoc Working Group." Mr. Hart seconded. Motion unanimously approved.

CCC Camp Trail & Signage: Discussion of Weston CCC Camp Trail Notes from Casey Merritt, Manchester District Recreation Program Manager (in public records). History and current status discussed. Specific discussion about the restrictions being asked for by the Forest Service (sign at the end of the trail and boulders) and the maintenance issues and commitments.

Mr. Hall motioned: Beyond the printing of the kiosk sign panel (already approved and \$ allocated) we hold off on the rest of the trail project until we hear more from Ms. Merritt and Mr. Harper about the next steps, costs, and ongoing obligations. Mr. Hart seconded. Motion unanimously approved. Mr. Hall will invite Ms. Merritt to the next meeting.

Mountain Valley Trails Association is named as a potential partner group.

Class 4 Road and Legal Trails in Weston: Discussion because of the Peabody Trail proposal. Trail maintenance can happen with Selectboard approval. Not a Conservation Commission job, but something we can encourage others to do.

Mr. Hall motioned to encourage volunteer individuals/groups to do maintenance on Legal Trails instead of committing the conservation commission to any future maintenance. Mr. Hart seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

Old Business: None

New Business: None

Ms. Mason motioned to adjourn. Ms. Murphy seconded. Motion to adjourn approved unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:36PM.

Next Meeting: October 6th, 2022 at 7PM.