

WESTMINSTER CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meeting, Thursday, 3/30/23 at 7:15 P.M via Zoom

1. Call to Order at 7:16 p.m.

Present: Kathy Kingston, Tatiana Schreiber (chair), Sarah Waldo, Rachael Shaw (secretary), Kestrel Craig, Annie Smith (guest), Jane Fitzwilliam (guest).

2. Adjustments to Agenda- none

3. Acceptance of Minutes: 3/3/23

Minutes read and accepted by unanimous consent.

4. Communications and Public Comment:

Annie Smith (member, Protectors of Wildlife) wonders how the Town (road crew, etc) deals with problematic beaver activity. Kathy reports that the Town Road Crew has occasionally hired a trapper for beaver issues. They do not shoot beavers. Jane Fitzwilliam seconded Annie's concerns.

We received an email from Cat Abbot after the furbearer workshop- will discuss at next meeting. (Add to agenda- publicize the Roadkill Reporting App)

5. Unfinished Business (Discussion / Action) –

a) Invasive species brochure – no change.

b) Website for Conservation Commission – Tatiana will send files to Kelley shortly.

c) Report back of sub-committee re ARPA proposal and collaboration with BEEC on education program for beaver friendly road practices

Kathy and Sarah met with Patti Smith and Michael Daly on 3/29/23. The Broadreach Grant application (for flow devices in Halifax and Westminster) is due 4/12/23. Tatiana made a motion that the WCC submit a letter to the Broadreach Fund in support of BEEC's grant proposal to include Westminster in their educational program on beaver friendly road practices and beaver habitat needs. Kathy seconded. Motion passed by unanimous support. Kathy reported that the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Funds (Proposals due by 12/2024, projects need to be completed by 12/2026). Proposals need to benefit the whole town. The proposal we are considering would include funding for additional beaver deceivers. We need to determine where these should be, and how many we would be asking for, as this will determine the budget. Kathy will have a conversation with Janelle Beard about potential beaver curriculum at the Westminster West School. Patti has lots of ideas about holding a beaver festival, it sounds like it will be geared toward children. The ARPA and Broadreach proposals complement each other, as "beaver

friendly road practices" include support for using beaver deceivers., as well as providing education to help municipalities and residents understand the value of beavers for flood mitigation, etc

d) De-brief from Chris Bernier presentation - Attendance was about 31 people. The presentation was from the VT Fish and Wildlife point of view. He entertained every question with respect and honesty. There was a refreshing lack of antagonism, and it seemed quite educational.

Tatiana mentioned that she would have preferred if a WCC member or library host could have helped to field questions, so the presenter wouldn't have to. Kestrel agreed. Annie and Jane both shared that they are frustrated that the VT Dept. of Fish and Wildlife has a very pro-trapping bias/board, and will keep pushing for humane legislation. WCC members share the desire to eliminate cruel trapping methods. We could follow up with Brie, send a thank you note, and ask her for some follow-up thoughts. Tatiana will draft a note and run it by us.

6. New Business:

a) Plan follow-up to marsh forum on water quality issues – May

2. Sarah reports that Alma had a good conversation with Marie Caduto but that she's too busy to do a presentation on May 2, so it is on hold. Sarah notes that she is focused on water quality data collection for now, which we can put on our agenda for our April meeting. Ideally, a plan can be implemented to improve the riparian buffers at the marsh. Hopefully Marie will have time to present more information about the health of the water/marsh in the fall. Part of our process is educating ourselves about wetland statutes.

b) Plan wildflower walk- Sarah has one on May 7 with the Pinnacle Association. We will do ours Saturday May 6 from 1-2:30 probably at Hidden Spring Road. Rachael will do publicity. Rachael and Sarah will comprise a subcommittee to plan the Wildflower Walk. Sarah (or Rachael) will check in with the (Milbank) couple who own that property.

c) Comments on Town Plan chapter on "Ecology and Natural Resources." It can be found in the Google Drive in the "Town Plan" folder. We can all make comments by next meeting.

7. Other Business: Thanks to Annie and Jane for attending and sharing their perspectives.

8. Date of Next Meeting: 4/27/23 7:15 Location, Zoom

9. Adjournment at 8:37 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by,
Rachael Shaw, Secretary