

WESTMINSTER CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meeting, Thursday, 12/7/23 at 7:15 P.M
Via Zoom

1. Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 7:18 pm
Present: Kathy Kingston, Kestrel Craig, Tatiana Schreiber (chair), Rachael Shaw (secretary).
2. Adjustments to Agenda: Add to other business: comment on email that Tatiana received on Google Drive, Sarah's comments on Green Burials.
3. Acceptance of Minutes: 10/26/23 – Minutes read and accepted by unanimous consent.
4. Communications and Public Comment: Kestrel met new Town Manager Lou Bordeaux at a meet and greet on 12/5 and mentioned that he would like to attend a meeting and meet all of us. We will send him an invitation to an upcoming meeting.
5. Unfinished Business (Discussion / Action) –
 - a) Beaver Working Group/BEEC program – status -BWG plan to meet with Lou soon regarding education on beaver situation town wide. New deceiver on hold pending sign off by Town Manager. BWG on hiatus for the winter months.
 - b) Continue comments on Natural Resources section of TP- Sarah, Rachael and Tatiana met on Nov 13 and made some additional comments on the NR section. Kathy will review these comments. Rachael will suggest dates/times for another working meeting to make additional comments.
 - c) Agriculture section of TP - Kathy suggests that we put our efforts on this section on hold due to inactive Planning Commission.
 - d) upcoming project ideas – report backs from research -
Kathy will continue trying to reach Ann Kerry re: wildlife corridor mapping.
Tatiana will follow up with Cory Ross about riparian buffer projects. Kathy reports that Patti Smith recommends that we look at Guilford's Natural Resources inventory on their town website and then follow up with any questions.
6. New Business:
 - a) WCC report for the Town Report – due Dec 15th, Tatiana will work on it and send out a copy to the rest of us to suggest changes before she submits it to Kelley at the Town.
 - b) Winter tracking program - Date set for Sunday Feb 11, 2024 from 1-2:30 pm. Weather date Feb 18. We would like to have the program in a wetland/watershed, either near the WW village, or along the Barnes brook watershed.
 - c) Cemetery planting – NRCD order (would need to be paid by Feb 28 if buying plants from Windham County NRCD). Kathy and Tatiana will do some research on the plants that are available from the NRCD vs FEDCO. Projected budget for several trees, shrubs and smaller plants- about \$300. Kathy will ask Chuck Lawrence and Selectboard chair Katrina Hamilton about approving some funds for this planting project. Sarah had noted that she had emailed Katrina Hamilton (Selectboard chair) about including cemetery planting plan and \$ for plant purchases on next Selectboard agenda. One of us should attend that Selectboard meeting.
 - d) Town forest management/discussion –Tatiana mentioned an interesting story on VPR recently about managing forests for allowing older growth and greater species diversity and age diversity. Perhaps the WCC could develop a project (we'd need to seek funding) to do some evaluation of this in our own Town Forest. Story at: <https://www.vermontpublic.org/local-news/>

[2023-12-04/can-we-make-vermonts-forests-seem-older-faster](https://www.vtrural.org/2023-12-04/can-we-make-vermonts-forests-seem-older-faster). Kestrel found a related article that she will forward to the WCC.

7. Other Business:

a) Google drive verification issues. Google is going to start requiring a security code sent to a phone whenever someone wants to log in to the drive, beginning December 14. Kestrel will look into the options for a no-cost Google Drive for a community group.

b. Green Burials – Sarah reports via email to WCC that the green burial guidelines are in Town Policy link on the town website and also on the state government website. She intends to write an educational article on this subject for the Gazette.

c. Add to agenda for next meeting: discussion of Act 59, Vermont Conservation strategies. Rachael and Kathy attended information session online. We should all be informed on this initiative that the Vermont Housing and Conservation board of the ANR is promoting. The idea is to have 30% conserved land by 2030, 50% by 2050.

d. Kathy mentioned that several recent members of the Westminster Planning Commission have made a recommendation to the Selectboard to facilitate a community visioning project in collaboration with the Vermont Council on Rural Development VCRD. Sarah had noted in her email that the Putney Town Plan was developed with assistance from the VCRD. This community visioning project produced a report and action plan – Our Future Putney – with vision and strategic priorities of community members. No grant development required. VCRD has internal funding. Only cost to the town of Putney was a community dinner. See <https://www.vtrural.org/>

8. Date of Next Meeting: Jan 4, 2024. 7:15 pm.

9. Adjournment at 8:35 pm

Minutes respectfully submitted by
Rachael Shaw