

WESTMINSTER CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meeting, Thursday, 1/23/25 at 7:00 P.M

In person: Westminster Institute

To join by Zoom, contact

westminstervtconservation@gmail.com

1. Call to Order. Meeting called to order at 7:05 pm. Present: Tatiana Schreiber (chair), Jim Calchera, Kestrel Craig, Rachael Shaw (secretary)
2. Adjustments to Agenda: no adjustments
3. Acceptance of Minutes: 12/05/24 – Minutes read. Jim made a motion that we accept the minutes as written. Kestrel seconded. Minutes accepted by unanimous consent.
4. Communications and Public Comment:
Email communications - Tatiana will summarize some key communications from the Gmail account at meetings going forward. Here are this past month's topics:
 - a.) AVCC survey – deadline 2/14. Tatiana filled out on behalf of Commission, but if anyone wants to fill out with your own interests, use your individual email address as she used our gmail address.
 - b.) 2025 Cooperator Training
Spring Training: April 25-27 at Northwoods Stewardship Center, East Charleston, VT
Fall Training: September 12-14 Kehoe Conservation Camp, Castleton, VT
 1. How to manage woodlands for wildlife, connects us to resources – appropriate for Conservation Commissions that are involved with management of woodlands, such as Town Forest, or advising others, cost \$100, can be refunded after participation.
 2. Sponsored by VT Coverts: Woodlands for Wildlife - Vermont Coverts is a peer-to-peer community of landowners, professionals and others learning from and supporting each other to enhance wildlife habitats through sound forest management.
 - c.) River News from Kathy Urffer, Connecticut River Conservancy. They are sending monthly newsletter. Comments on water quality assessment of Wilder dam due Feb 5th. Concerns of the Conservancy can be found in the newsletter.

d.) Environmental Leadership Trainings and Webinars (sponsored by Community Wildlife Program of Vt Fish and Wildlife) ELT is a sequence of two courses that teaches the science behind conservation planning along with leadership theory designed to help you grow in your capacity and effectiveness as an environmental leader in your community. These courses are primarily designed for members of conservation commissions, but they are open to anyone with an active role or interest in local environmental leadership including members of planning commissions, town forest committees, and dedicated conservation volunteers. Each course is three-weeks, with an online, interactive session on Tuesday evenings. Instruction is a combination of live presentations, group discussions, small-group activities, and individual exploration. Approximately 30 – 60 minutes of individual homework is also assigned each week. To register, and for questions, please contact Jens Hilke at Jens.Hilke@Vermont.gov.

e.) Long thread on conservation through buying land that runs Jan 5-9. Many interesting points about how other Conservation Commissions are using Conservation Funds to buy land and steward it.

5. Unfinished Business (Discussion / Action) –

a) Town Plan - Tatiana will follow up with Lachlan Francis regarding setting up a meeting with him to discuss our comments on the Natural Resources section of the town plan.

b) Other programs/projects – follow up –

1. riparian buffer project. Tatiana drafted a letter of support which is on our google drive. Tatiana read the letter to us. Kestrel moved to approve the letter and send it in to Cory Ross at the Windham County Natural Resources Conservation District. Jim seconded. The motion passed by unanimous decision.

2. Biodiversity Inventory (Guilford)-Tatiana learned that it was funded by the Selectboard (cost: somewhere between \$5000 and \$6000) over a period of several years. It took approximately four years. It would have been more expensive except that it was completed by Patty Smith of BEEC who lived nearby. There is a PDF of the report on our google drive. Next step would be to consult with Patty about it to find out if she had interest in doing similar work for Westminster and if not, if she would have any persons to recommend. Jim will ask VT Fish and Wildlife if they would have interest/availability/resources for biodiversity inventory. Tatiana will also ask Cory Ross if he knows of any technical resources for such an inventory available from the Windham Country Natural Resources Conservation District.

3. Town forest planning- Jim brainstormed a trail development plan. He will send email to our gmail account so we can have it on the drive. All are

encouraged to comment on the draft. We decided to start by planning a public event to solicit ideas and suggestions from town residents concerning their interest in recreational uses of the Town Forest. This could be done in April, perhaps around Earth Day.

c) Recruitment of new members -Gazette articles, Town Meeting Report, April Town Forest Public Event, ephemeral walk, word of mouth.

6. New Business:

a) Report back from CC regional meeting - The presenter was ill. The presentation will happen at a future regional meeting. Attending towns each gave reports on what their commissions had been doing. There were reports from: Rockingham (working on designating Outstanding Resource Waters under law which may allow them to increase protections for these waters, such as Brockways Mills and Herricks Cove); Londonderry (education and development of a pollinator corridor); Chester (which is a committee, not a Commission, has built trails and is stewarding 20 acres of town property); Dummerston (monthly programs, emailed newsletter, steps down to West River at Covered Bridge, booklet of ten trails in town, budget of \$1000 a year—what doesn't get used gets rolled over into the Conservation Fund); Vernon (used ARPA funds to verify wildlife corridors that have been mapped by the state); Putney (protecting forest blocks and wetlands, with town funds, and stewarding these lands; Edible Brattleboro (food forest in West Brattleboro); Marlboro (ash tree inventory, protected 120 acres of town land with grants from the Green Mountain Conservancy, tree plantings, Connecticut River Conservancy can help with conservation easements along river corridors). There will be another meeting in April.

7. Other Business: none

8. Date of Next Meeting: Feb 27th, Westminster West Library

9. Adjournment. Jim moved to adjourn, Kestrel seconded. Meeting adjourned by unanimous consent at 8:30 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by
Rachael Shaw, secretary