

TOWN OF MONTGOMERY
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CONSERVATION COMMISSION (MCC) MEETING (unapproved draft)
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 03, 2024

The meeting, held via Zoom, was called to order by Carissa Stein at 5:34 p.m.

Attendance: Marielle Ambroch, Patrick Calecas, Joan Hildreth, Parma Jewett, Lynn Locher, Matt Paggi, Charles Snedcor (had to leave at 6:42 p.m.), Carissa Stein. It should be noted that Charles was welcomed to his first meeting as an official MCC member. His appointment to the MCC had been approved by the Selectboard on 3/18/24.

Absent: Susan Baker

Visitors: Melissa Haberman from the Montgomery Center for the Arts (MCA) and Sarah Lunn representing Missisquoi River Basin Association (MRBA). (Sarah is also with Upper Missisquoi and Trout Rivers Wild and Scenic Committee [UMATR]).

Visitors – Welcome to Both and Discussions:

Melissa, MCA- Melissa and Joan had informally discussed the idea of collaboration/coordination between the MCA and MCC on certain events, and this was an opportunity to further discuss and seek input from the rest of the MCC. All agreed that it would be great to work together in areas which would be relevant to both entities. Staying in touch re: dates for planned events, promoting each other's events, and collaborating on some of them were all discussed. Melissa shared about some upcoming MCA events, as well as recent ones. Further information re: this topic can be found on p. 3 of the minutes under "Possible Future Presenters, #2 Elliot Cluba." Carissa suggested that, if possible, any requests for funds required for sponsorship be submitted in advance to allow time for discussion and vote at MCC monthly meetings.

Sarah, MRBA – Sarah indicated that MRBA likes to check in formally with their partners once a year, which was the reason for her visit. She asked if MCC members had any questions/concerns. Carissa shared about the watershed modeling grant and the importance of having community involvement in the process, and asked Sarah if MRBA might have some ideas on strategies for this moving forward. Sarah also shared about plans for planting a rain garden at River Walk Park to help capture storm water. She hopes that there will be assistance from Americorps on the project. All agreed that this sounds like a very worthwhile project. Carissa stated that, if there is a shortfall in funding due to MRBA not receiving grant money for the project as hoped, they should send the MCC an itemized accounting of funds needed for project completion. The MCC could likely be of assistance.

Additions/Deletions/Changes to the Agenda – Charles raised the idea of **planting wildflower seeds** on any Town grass fields which have to be mowed. This would help pollinators and cut down on mowing costs. He said that he has seeds available for such a purpose. All thought this was a very good idea. Carissa mentioned that Cristin Kovacs has applied for a grant to plant a pollinator garden at the school, and she might be interested in getting some of the seeds, too. Lynn brought up the library's seed program

as well. Carissa raised the question of whether or not there might be an interest in converting grass areas of cemeteries into wildflower fields. All agreed on the importance of supporting pollinators.

Minutes 03/06/24 – After discussion, Patrick made a motion to approve the minutes, Marielle seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously; the 03/06/24 minutes were approved.

Budget/CD Update, Treasurer's Report – Patrick reported that there had been two grant reimbursements received as a result of completion of both, one for \$1,125.00 and the other for \$3,500.00. Carissa said that the first was for the UMATR knotweed grant and the second for the fruit and nut tree grant. All expressed appreciation for all of Carissa's hard work on both. There will also soon be a payment made of \$66.66 for the MCC's share of co-sponsoring the Gardening for Pollinators talk held on 4/2/24.

Events/Projects:

Planned:

Green Up Day (GUD), Saturday, 5/4/24, based at the PSB - Parma provided an update on the preparation for GUD, including efforts to: obtain supplies such as bags and gloves; get the posters/promotional materials for distribution, and; complete other necessary organizational tasks. She and Jackie are working on all of this, and will be providing the goodies for the event. Everyone is appreciative of Parma's and Jackie's efforts. Carissa requested that, when Parma has further details re: plans for the day, she share them with other members of the MCC. The information can then be distributed to help encourage increased community participation in GUD and ensure awareness of details about the day, including the change of location from that of prior years.

FCNRCD Tree Sale Pick-Up, Saturday, 5/4/24 at PSP 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. Carissa reported that there have been a lot of orders. Matt and Patrick have agreed to transport the trees to the PSB in their vehicles on 5/3, which everyone very much appreciates.

Proposed/Discussion/Updates:

Coordination with MCA – Please see p. 1 “Visitors, Melissa, MCA”

Jewett Property: Knotweed Control, Recreation Path – Carissa reported that the expected knotweed situation for this year is somewhat unclear due to changes in sand deposition and other factors. However, she estimates that the area would need to be brush hogged up to four times during the warmer months. There was some discussion of utilizing goats for knotweed control, but more research on availability/feasibility would be needed. Sarah from MRBA said that she had tried to source goats for this purpose elsewhere and it was challenging. Carissa said that, in 2023, the first brush hogging was completed on 5/7, and that was good timing. After discussion, Matt made a motion that, if the Selectboard deems that the Request for Proposal (RFP) process is necessary for the brush hogging contract, the RFP process should be initiated. Lynn seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Montgomery Elementary School (MES) Graduation Gift of Tree/Plaque– Carissa has been in contact with the MES. The graduating students have decided that they would like to have a lilac bush. They have not yet selected a quote for the plaque. The bush will be purchased from Beaver Meadow by the MCC, and the shrub tag will be ordered as soon as the quote is selected.

Town Forest (TF) Next Steps-

Matt provided an overview of all of the efforts which have been made re: the TF over the past few years, as well as an update on the current status. He plans to contact two additional contractors in order to set up site visits. The focus will be on a bridge for the stream crossing and addressing erosion concerns. At least some of the other trail work could likely be done by volunteers. A key goal is to have a low impact trail system.

Possible Future Presenters:

Nate Nourse – Parma agreed to send a link to everyone about his website which identifies areas of expertise such as pollinators, berries, etc.

Elliot Cluba – Melissa and Joan shared about the Herbal Alchemy workshop which Elliot recently offered at the MCA, and how well received and attended it was. Melissa mentioned other workshops Elliot will soon be doing at the MCA, too, including Family Fire Skills and Birch Basket Making. There was discussion about other topics Elliot might cover, such as seasonal foraging or offering another tracking workshop. Joan will contact Elliot about any other workshops/presentations he offers which would be of interest and will let everyone, including Melissa, know what he says.

Other Possible Presentation Topic(s) – Pollinators, Insects – Beneficial and Harmful –

Idea of an event re: insect “hotels” such a Mason Bee Boxes was raised. There was some brainstorming about having a workshop to make Mason Bee Boxes and including education about natural ways to provide habitat for Mason Bees as well as other beneficial insects. This could be an appropriate workshop for including children and coordinating with the MCA as well as possibly other CCs. Joan offered to contact the RCC about this, noting that one of their members, Dan Seeley, makes Mason Bee Boxes.

Patrick made a motion, seconded by Lynn, to adjourn the meeting at 6:50 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by Joan Hildreth