

TOWN OF MONTGOMERY
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CONSERVATION COMMISSION (MCC) MEETING (unapproved draft)
WEDNESDAY, MAY 01, 2024

The meeting, held at the Public Safety Building (PSB), was called to order by Carissa Stein at 5:30 p.m.

Attendance: Marielle Ambroch, Susan Baker, Joan Hildreth, Lynn Locher, Matt Paggi, Charles Snedikor (had to leave at 6:45 p.m.), Carissa Stein.

Absent: Patrick Calecas, Parma Jewett.

Visitors: Bill Hildreth (left at 6:54 p.m.)

Additions/Deletions/Changes to the Agenda – None.

Minutes 04/03/24 – After discussion, Matt made a motion to approve the minutes, Marielle seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously; the 04/03/24 minutes were approved.

Budget/CD Update, Treasurer's Report – No update. Carissa reported that the lilac bush for the graduation gift will be purchased soon. She also reported that the invoice for the MCC's share of the cost for the April 2nd event which was co-sponsored by MCC, Richford Conservation Commission (RCC) and Enosburg Conservation Commission (ECC) had been paid, but it had been sent directly to the presenter. It should have been sent to the RCC instead because they had already paid the full invoice to the presenter. Erin provided guidance on the appropriate way to correct this, and Carissa plans to follow-up. In addition, there was discussion about the Conservation Fund (CF) and the value of keeping track of the balance as well as debits and credits to the CF. All agreed that this would be helpful.

Events/Projects:

Planned:

Upcycling Eclipse Glasses Initiated/Giving to Richford Conservation Commission (RCC) – The RCC is collecting eclipse glasses to send to Astronomers Without Borders, an organization which will then send them to destinations around the world where future eclipses will happen in an effort to make the glasses available to people who might not otherwise have access to them. Rissa received a box of glasses from the Town Librarian, Marlene, and will also pick up any glasses collected at the MES. She plans to then deliver them to the RCC to assist with this project.

Green Up Day (GUD), Saturday, 5/4/24, based at the PSB - Parma has done a phenomenal job of setting us up for success for GUD by getting extra bags and advertising. She and Jackie plan to have homemade pastries and water available for participants starting at 10:30 a.m. at the PSB on GUD. Bags have been made available prior to GUD as well.

FCNRCD Tree Sale Pick-Up, Saturday, 5/4/24 at PSP 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. Carissa, Matt and Patrick will be transporting the trees to the PSB, with the plan to have the trees at the PSB @ 9:30a.m. that day.

Proposed/Discussion/Updates:

Conservation Fund (CF) Application – Prior to this meeting, Carissa had sent to all MCC members for their review the following: a copy of an application requesting \$10,000.00 from the CF, and; supporting documents. In addition, on 5/1/24, she and Lynn had attended a site visit to the property which is the subject of the application, and Carissa provided everyone with a written summary of the findings from that visit in advance of the MCC meeting. Then, at this meeting, there was discussion of all of the above and of the many benefits to the Town which could be derived from conserving this property. Further, there was discussion of each of the criteria used by the MCC for the evaluation of CF applications, including: 1) ecological value; 2) watershed protection; 3) connectivity; 4) scenic value; 5) public access/recreation. Utilizing these five criteria, all agreed that there appeared to be no question that conserving this property would meet the first four of the criteria. However, regarding the fifth criterion, there were some questions raised about public access/recreation. After discussion, Matt made a motion to approve the CF application for \$10,000.00 based on the high scores on the majority of the criteria, with the caveat/recommendation that the easement allow for non-motorized, dispersed public access. Lynn seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Conflict of Interest Discussion – The issue of situations where conflicts of interest, or potential or perceived conflicts of interest, could arise was raised. All agreed that this is an important issue, and that it can be especially challenging to avoid conflicts of interest in smaller towns where many people know one another and there can be overlapping roles. Carissa offered to check with the Selectboard to see if the Town has a policy or guidelines about this issue, and all agreed that this would be helpful.

Jewett Property: Knotweed Control, Recreation Path – Carissa reported that she had inquired about the appropriate procedure for procuring services for the property and was told that the Request for Proposal (RFP) process would not be necessary. She estimated that, depending on weather/rate of growth, 5 or 6 cuts would probably be needed for the season. After discussion, Carissa made a motion that we pay up to \$140.00 per brush hogging, up to six times for the year, for knotweed control and maintenance of recreation paths on the Jewett Property Town Land flood plain. Susan seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Carissa agreed to check with local contractor(s) regarding interest and availability.

Town Forest (TF) Next Steps-

Matt shared about the 4/26 visit to the TF made by several members of the MCC and additional community members, Dave Burns and Bill Hildreth, for the purpose of scoping out a site for the bridge crossing. It appears that a spot which could work well was identified. Matt has set up another visit to the site on 5/6 with a trail building contractor in order to get his input. Other MCC members will be there as well. In addition, Matt is waiting to hear back from an additional trail builder, hoping to set up a time with him, too. Various ideas for the bridge are being considered, but obtaining professional input will be crucial.

Montgomery Elementary School (MES) Graduation Gift of Tree/Plaque– Carissa plans to purchase the lilac bush from Beaver Meadow. She has been in contact with the MES and was told that a decision had not yet been made about the quote for the plaque.

Creamery Bridge Landing Site – Carissa reported on concerns related to this area. One issue is that, due to trash frequently being left at the site of the swimming hole and other disrespectful behavior and its impact, the landowner decided to post the land there. In addition, the landowner expressed concern about the location of the snowplow turn around due to inadvertent movement of sediment from plowing as well as shrub/tree damage impacting the integrity of the streambank. This led to questions about the impact of the sediment on water quality. There have been discussions with the landowner, the Road crew, Selectboard, Lindsey Wight and Carissa about possible ways of addressing these concerns.

Possible Future Presenters – Tabled until next meeting.

Nate Nourse – Tabled until next meeting.

Elliot Cluba – Tabled until next meeting.

Matt made a motion, seconded by Lynn, to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by Joan Hildreth