

TOWN OF MONTGOMERY
PO BOX 356; MONTGOMERY CENTER, VT 05471
802-326-4719 <http://www.montgomeryvt.us>
CONSERVATION COMMISSION (MCC) MEETING (unapproved draft)
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12, 2024

The meeting, held at the Rec. Center Pavilion, was called to order by Carissa Stein at 5:37 p.m.

Attendance: Marielle Ambroch, Susan Baker, Patrick Calecas, Joan Hildreth, Lynn Locher, Matt Paggi, Carissa Stein.

Absent: Parma Jewett, Charles Snedikor.

Visitors: Lindsey Wight of MRBA/UMATR was welcomed.

Additions/Deletions/Changes to the Agenda – stream stewardship event; sharing of watershed study results

Minutes 05/01/24 – After discussion, Lynn made a motion to approve the minutes, Susan seconded the motion, Patrick abstained from the vote, everyone else voted in favor, and the motion passed; the 05/01/24 minutes were approved.

Budget/CD Update, Treasurer's Report – Patrick reported that the current CD balance is \$76,690.74. There will be further review and follow-up on the budget re: cash in/cash out. In addition, there will soon be an update on the Conservation Fund information.

Events/Projects:

Planned:

Rain Garden Planting at Riverwalk/Kaleb's Field on Thursday, July 11th from 10:00

a.m. – 3:00 p.m. – Lindsey shared about the plans for this event. There will be a group from ECO Americorps helping with the planting. In addition, this will be an opportunity for those participants to learn more about careers in conservation, as well as other ways to become involved in community conservation efforts. As such, Lindsey requested that someone from the MCC be in attendance to provide information about conservation commissions, and the various roles they play in serving their communities. The garden will be about 25' x 15', and the plan is to have deep-rooted plants, including ostrich ferns and plants beneficial to pollinators. Carissa said that plants could be transplanted from the Jewett property Town land, if desired. Lynn offered plants from her property as well. There will also be a sign erected, and there are plans to have an opening ceremony in the fall at the same time as the MRBA Knotweed Bonfire. This could be a larger collaborative event, too, by including surrounding Towns' CCs and community members. All agreed that this sounded great.

Montgomery Elementary School (MES) Graduation Lilac Planting, Thursday, June 13th at 1:00 p.m. – Carissa reported that the lilac was purchased for \$38.00, and the tag which was ordered arrived, and it was shown to everyone. Carissa has shovels for the students to use for the planting as well as organic material. Carissa and Marielle plan to attend.

Proposed/Discussion/Updates:

Farmer's Market— After discussion, it was agreed that it is very worthwhile for the MCC to have a presence at the Farmer's Market, and that being there once a month, as in past years, should continue. The plan is to have the MCC table there on June 29th, July 27th and August 31st. There was discussion about various materials to have available at the table, including Franklin County Natural Resources Conservation District pamphlets (which Lindsey offered to provide), the knotweed pamphlet, and perhaps information about native plants/seeds.

Mums Sale — After discussion about funds raised during past mums sales, and the degree of connection of mums to natural ecology and conservation, Joan made a motion that the MCC not have the mums sale this year, and instead explore alternatives such as selling native seeds. Matt seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. Lindsey shared about the Native Seed Collection Project coordinated by Brooke Fleishman. It was agreed that it would be helpful to learn more about this project, and perhaps information about the project could be provided at the Farmer's Market.

Town Forest (TF) – TR Fellows Engineering VT- Cricket McCusker; Additional Input from Others-

Matt reported that he has been in contact with Cricket, and she hopes to visit the site when she is in this part of the State sometime this month. Her firm had been recommended by Keegan Tierney, Director of Field Programs at the Green Mountain Club, due to her experience working on Long Trail projects. Also, Dave Burns has an engineer friend from Montreal who visited the site in order to provide his input, and Joan shared some of his thoughts about it. There was discussion about the need to apply for grant funding for the bridge design. Lindsey indicated that Sally Rivard might have suggestions re: the bridge as well as other trail system issues. Sally has considerable experience with facilitating trail development at the Jay Rec. Center, including the construction of a large bridge over the brook there. Joan agreed to contact Sally about any recommendations she might have. In addition, Matt offered to share the Vermont Town Forest Trail Design Guide with members of the MCC.

Conservation Fund (CF) – Amount of Request per Application – There was discussion about the various criteria utilized for evaluating CF applications, and how to score and weigh them, as well as any limits on the amount of funding which can be requested per application. The current criteria used by the MCC for the evaluation of CF applications include: 1) ecological value; 2) watershed protection; 3) connectivity; 4) scenic value; 5) public access/recreation. There was discussion about the weight which should be given to each of the five criteria. In addition, other related questions/issues arose. A couple of examples are as follows. Should more weight be given to projects which provide greater qualitative benefit to the Town (and how would that be determined)? Should the provision of public access be weighted more heavily in the evaluation? Although there were no final answers at the end of the discussion, all agreed that it is important to thoughtfully consider all of the points raised, and that a clear, objective, fair process/outcome is the goal. It was agreed that input from other organizations which evaluate similar types of requests could be very useful. Lindsey offered to share the criteria her organization uses for their management plans, which

everyone appreciated. Joan agreed to contact Dave Erickson, Conservation Director for Cold Hollow to Canada, to ask for his input.

Creamery Bridge Landing Site – Carissa, along with Lindsey, provided an update. The Town road crew drove a plow to the site in order to demonstrate just how much turn around space is required. Carissa, Lindsey, and one of the landowners who had expressed concerns about the area were present, and all of them found the demonstration helpful. Any new turn around would require permission from another affected landowner, and the space would need to be large enough to accommodate the largest Town plow. Carissa and Lindsey discussed a plan for following up with landowners. The new turnaround would need to be in place before restoration work at the current site could be done. Lindsey indicated that grant funding could be available for restoration.

Stream Stewardship Dinner and Learning Event at the Fairfield Community Center, Wednesday, June 19th from 6 – 8 p.m. The Franklin County Natural Resources Conservation District will be providing a free taco dinner and an opportunity to learn how to be “Stream Wise” in order to protect water quality, enhance wildlife habitat, promote flood resilience, and support recreation. Carissa will send out information about the event on the Listserv.

Watershed Study Results – Upcoming Opportunity to Share with the Community – The date/time of a meeting about this should be confirmed soon, and it will likely be held at the Public Safety Building. Once confirmed, details will be shared. There was also discussion about additional ways to ensure that information about the results of this important study gets out to members of the community. Some ideas to explore include a direct mailing to community members, having a Zoom option, social media, Listserv.

Possible Future Presenters –

Nate Nourse – Tabled until next meeting. Parma was not present at this meeting.

Elliot Cluba – The list of presentations/workshops offered by Elliot was reviewed, and everyone agreed that there are lots of great options. Many members expressed interest in Acorn Processing, Ethnobotanical Herbology, Fire Skills, Star Stories, Land Evaluation, and Animal Tracking. Lindsey raised the idea of incorporating Fire Skills and possibly Star Stories into the MRBA Knotweed Bonfire event (mentioned earlier in the minutes) which is planned for November. Everyone thought that was a great idea. Joan agreed to get in touch with Elliot about all of the above and inquire about his schedule. It was decided that it would be better to plan events in the non-summer months, focusing instead on this fall, this winter, and/or next spring, and Joan agreed to let Elliot know that preference.

Patrick made a motion, seconded by Lynn, to adjourn the meeting at 7:11 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by Joan Hildreth