

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

The meeting, held at the Rec. Center Pavilion, was called to order by Carissa Stein at 5:34 p.m.

Attendance: Patrick Calecas, Joan Hildreth (arrived at 5:40 p.m.), Lynn Locher, Matt Paggi, Charles Snedcor, Carissa Stein.

Absent: Marielle Ambroch, Susan Baker, Parma Jewett.

Visitors: None.

Additions/Deletions/Changes to the Agenda – Hazen’s Notch Conservation Trust request; Vincent’s Bridge swimming hole area – landowner’s concerns, Open Meeting Law.

Minutes 06/12/24 – After discussion, Patrick made a motion to approve the minutes and Lynn seconded. Joan was not yet present at the meeting for the vote; everyone else in attendance voted in favor, and the motion passed. The 06/12/24 minutes were approved.

Budget/CD Update, Treasurer’s Report – Patrick provided a spreadsheet detailing activity in the MCC General Fund (GF) during FY 2023 and FY 2024, as well as information re: the MCC savings/CD, and the balance in the Conservation Reserve Fund (CRF). Current balances are: MCC GF \$12,394.32; CD \$76,853.30; CRF \$41,152.80. All agreed that the spreadsheet is very helpful. After discussion, Patrick and Carissa agreed to seek additional detail about some of the entries in the MCC GF ledger. It was also noted that the CRF balance does not reflect the \$10K which was approved recently for a conservation project. This is apparently because the W9 form has not yet been completed. Carissa plans to contact the landowner to inquire about the status of the form.

Events/Projects:

Planned:

Rain Garden Planting at Riverwalk/Kaleb’s Field on Thursday, July 11th from 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. - MCC Representative to Attend at Noon – Carissa agreed to attend

the event to share with the ECO Americorps participants information about careers in conservation, as well as to discuss with them ways to become involved in community conservation efforts. Everyone appreciated Carissa’s willingness to do this.

Farmer’s Market–July 27th and August 31st MCC Representation - Lynn and Patrick agreed to take care of the MCC table there both days, and Matt offered to be backup for the August date, if needed. Everyone was appreciative.

August 7th MCC Meeting/Watershed Data Collection Presentation and Outreach Strategy – 5:30 p.m. (likely time, to be confirmed) at the PSB - The next MCC meeting time will be dedicated to this presentation which is intended for any community members who are interested. There was discussion about the importance of this data for the Town, and the need to ensure that the information is relatable, that there is ample opportunity for questions/discussion, and that notice of the meeting is well publicized. It was agreed that information about the meeting should be provided on multiple platforms,

including Front Porch Forum, the Montgomery website, Lois Lumbré's News from Montgomery, MCC Facebook (FB) page, Montgomery Vermont Area Community Forum on FB. There was also discussion about sending out a postcard re: the meeting, as well as a Zoom option and recording for those unable to attend at the time.

Proposed/Discussion/Updates:

Town Forest (TF) Update- Matt reported that he was recently in contact again with Krickie McCusker of TR Fellows Engineering VT, and she is still planning to visit to the site. He had also explored possible grant options, but none appear to be available through the State this year. It was agreed that Lindsey Wight of MRBA/UMATR might have some ideas. Joan had not yet contacted Sally Rivard for her input, but plans to do so. Sally has experience with the Jay Rec Center's bridge and trails projects which could be relevant to the TF. Prior to this meeting, Matt shared with MCC members the Vermont Town Forest Trail Design Guide as a helpful reference.

Conservation Reserve Fund (CRF) – Qualitative Review and Decision-Making

Process – The decision rubric which UMATR utilizes for their grants was provided by Lindsey Wight and shared with MCC members prior to the meeting. All were appreciative of Lindsey sharing this information. In addition, Joan shared input received from Dave Erickson, Conservation Director for Cold Hollow to Canada about assessing applications. Dave agreed that the general evaluation criteria the MCC had identified make good sense. He also suggested that the decision-making process should be flexible to allow for projects with unique attributes. In addition, he recommended ensuring that any approved projects would be consistent with, and support, the goals/priorities identified in the Town Plan and Vermont Conservation Design.

Elliot Cluba: Fire Skills, Star Stories at Fall Knotweed Bonfire- Joan has contacted Elliot, but has not yet heard back from him. She plans to reach out to him again.

MCA Collaboration – October – Ethan Tapper Bood Signing – No update.

MCC Chair Succession Plan – Carissa shared that she will be stepping down from the Chair position, as well as from the MCC altogether, at the end of August, 2024 due to an upcoming move. Everyone acknowledged the amazing job she has done and how much she will be missed. It was agreed that, although she is irreplaceable, it would be very helpful to have someone in the role who has a strong background in conservation/natural resources (as does Carissa). At the meeting, no one expressed an interest in assuming the Chair role at this time. Carissa agreed to talk with Charlie Hancock about the change.

Jewett Estate Town Land – Visit in August – Carissa proposed a visit to the property with the MCC members in August, and all agreed that it was a great idea. Date/time TBD.

Additions:

Open Meeting Law – Carissa shared about the new law requiring the recording of public bodies' meetings. This requirement is in addition to the following other measures which are already in place to provide transparency: advance public notice of meetings, including posting agendas and timely public access to minutes of meetings.

Hazen's Notch Conservation Trust Request – Carissa reported that there was a request to provide a letter of support re: steps which are being taken to conserve property owned

by Rolf Anderson. After discussion, Carissa agreed to write the letter on behalf of the MCC.

Vincent's Bridge Swimming Hole Area – The landowner at the end of the road expressed concern about inappropriate behavior in the area of the bridge and swimming hole. She is interested in the idea of having the wide side path which leads into the river blocked off to prevent vehicles from going into the water. After discussion, it was determined that the landowner could speak directly with the owner of the access point about this, and that, if needed, MRBA/UMATR could be contacted to inquire about any grant funding which might be available. _

Patrick made a motion, seconded by Lynn, to adjourn the meeting at 7:03 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by Joan Hildreth