

December 19, 2024

Attendees: Ron Stancliff, Jerry Throne, Dave Stevens, Jim Pease, Pamela Stanyon, Sandra Zebal, Jess Zehngut, Brent Teillon, Hilary Warner

Meeting opened at Town Hall at 6:30

The November meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

New Business

1. Downtown Tree Planting-Martha Battle is working with Gail Beck on planting trees in the downtown area; she is currently writing a grant proposal. They want to plant trees around the Copley Municipal Parking Lot to replace some that have been lost. There were two possible state grants. There are several members interested in the proposal including Jess, Jim and Pam.

2. Discuss MSI Industrial Park and Act 250 waiver on housing-Jerry sent the letter requesting MCC involvement in the hearing to the Selectboard this week. Jim will investigate who has been granted party status to the hearing besides the Town. Ron made the motion that Jerry and Jim could be the MCC representatives with the Town for the hearing if the Selectboard approves of the request. The motion was approved unanimously. Ron handed out a copy of the Act 250 housing waiver information and pointed out that the waiver applies within 1/2 mile of the designated downtown area (a map was provided). The waiver has been approved by the legislature through 1/1/2027 to encourage mixed income housing projects.

3. Discuss MCC funding request with Selectboard-there was a long discussion about what should the commission do in the event the Selectboard refuses to allow the 1/2 cent per \$1000 grant list conservation fund fee for the Town Meeting vote. If the board does not allow the fee on voting day should MCC provide a petition to the board requesting the fee be added to the vote agenda. One problem with this option is that the petition must be provided to the Town by January 16. We need a decision by January 1 in order to get a petition signed by the 16th.

Ron handed out a financial summary from Carol Bradley dated 1/22/2013 summarizing the MCC balance at that time. There are two separate funds the Commission has a role in: The Forest/Land Maintenance Fund which is derived from income from logging of the Town Forest or donations, & The Land/Conservation Fund which is derived from income from a conservation fund fee or donations.

It seems unlikely that the Selectboard will approve the fee request and we do not want to get into a dispute with the board over this issue. We have two options: (a) after the board announces their decision we can go to them and propose a 1/4 cent or lower rate and negotiate or (b) request a special allocation of a specific amount, such as \$25,000, as most of the local nonprofit organizations have done each year. Pam made the motion that we followup with the Selectboard on the 1/2 cent fee and negotiate a lower percentage; the agenda language similar to the 2023 town meeting ballot item. The motion was approved unanimously.

4. Discuss Pie for Breakfast community meeting-the meeting is January 4th. We have the Town Forest Display and materials from the Display window. We should discuss both the Town Forest and Land Conservation at the meeting.

5. Other-Ron noted that the land at the end of Cote Hill Rd owned by Charles Pepe might become available for conservation. The owner has had meetings with TNC, VLT and the state but none of the parties were interested. There are about 100 acres available with numerous trails on it and it borders the Lamoille River; the land value is about \$600,000. We will discuss this at the January meeting and whether representatives of the Commission should be sent to meet with the landowner.

Old Business

1. Duhamel reforestation-it was concluded that probably no further reforestation work will occur on the property.

2. Potash Brook and other streams naming-Ron handed out maps and lists of all the streams in Town and which ones are named and unnamed. He also has a spreadsheet of parcels that abut the Molly's Pond wetland complex. Both should be reviewed and discussed at future meetings. The former for providing a list to the Selectboard for naming streams that are unnamed in order to then provide all named streams with an undisturbed setback or buffer and the latter for possible future land conservation projects in the area.

3. Discuss expanding the questionnaire-Pam handed out the final results from her 25 participant Monkey poll pilot test. A motion was made to look at the Google questionnaire model in order to increase our sample size and if feasible use it or if not, to pay \$90 for 1 month to the Monkey poll to expand the sample size. The motion was approved unanimously.

4. Copley Trail-we need to ask Sonny Demars if he will pay for the stairwell construction and design on the Copley Trail behind the hospital.

5. Other-Brent the shortest day of the year is the 21st and there is a 70 degree difference in the angle of the sun between the summer and winter equinoxes. Also a \$1000 donation was made to the MCC conservation fund by an anonymous donor. Jerry-the membership fee for VACD has been increased by \$25. A motion was made to approve payment for the increased fee; The motion was approved unanimously.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:17 pm

Respectively submitted,
Jim Pease, Secretary