



**TOWN OF MORRISTOWN CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES- DRAFT
COMMUNITY MEETING ROOM**

On Zoom and at 43 Portland St. Morrisville, VT 05661
6:30 PM Thursday, January 23, 2025

ATTENDEES: Ron Stancliff, Jerry Throne, Dave Stevens, Pamela Stanyon, Sandra Zebal, Brent Teillon, Hilary Warner (via Zoom).

GUESTS: Chuck Pepe, Christine Pepe, Nancy Dunavan, Tom Dunavan, Tom Rogers, Matt Kelly & 2 others.

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM.

Meeting minutes of December 19, 2024 were approved unanimously.
Treasurer's Report

OLD BUSINESS 4.: Muddy Moose property at end of Cote Hill Rd.- Chuck & Christine Pepe discussed their interest to preserve 100 acres out of a total 168 acres of land that they own and operate a cabin lodging business called The Muddy Moose. They desire to sell the remaining 68 acres where the cabins are located. Part of the land that would be conserved includes 5 miles of trails that have been maintained, a waterfall, swimming holes, Jacobs Brook & Lamoille River access. The Pepes are looking to receive the assessed value of the 100 acres to be conserved. The land is in current use. A brochure of the property depicting the trails and other features of the property was distributed to the members. Brent and Chuck are to arrange a date and time when they can tour the property, after which, Brent will report his thoughts about the property to the MCC. The process by which the land could be purchased by the town, was discussed; in the meantime, if a suitable offer is made to purchase the entire property before an agreement is reached for the 100 acre portion, the entire property would be sold.

GUEST SPEAKER TOM ROGERS STOWE LAND TRUST (SLT), EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Tom brought Matt Kelly, who is the new Director of Land Protection for SLT and both discussed their backgrounds. The goal of SLT's strategic plan is to become a regional land trust. SLT is looking to expand its impact zone and Morristown will be one of the first places that they will be looking. SLT is taking their time to speak to communities to find out what their needs are and Matt will be leading the process. Wildlife corridors and crossings are not just limited to Stowe so a regional approach is desired. They want to relieve pressures on recreation areas and spread the economic boost to surrounding areas and impact the area more broadly. They want to be sure the communities want them to be there; they need to listen to the needs of the community and hear what the values are that they share, know what the places are that they value and want to protect and how they can bring resources to that to make it happen. SLT will be working on that over the next year and redrawing the map of SLT's area of influence. The general geography of the area they are looking at is the Lamoille River to the Winooski River and along the ridge lines of the Greens and Worcester's, including potentially the towns of Hyde Park and Wolcott. Preliminarily the Green River Reservoir area and town of Johnson would be included. Tom said that conserving natural spaces and preserving green space is the most cost effective and efficient means of protecting community and home from flooding. SLT will become all of our community's land trust, not just Stowe and there would be access to their donor base to help communities fund these type of efforts. SLT receives foundation grants as well as donations and partners with other land trusts that are run by volunteers to help get more projects done. Properties which are highly used that are a

community gem and are in danger of development and of being sold out from under us would be something that people can really get behind. Ron mentioned that MCC is working on getting a questionnaire out to the Morristown public to get input from the community and offered that we could add some questions to it from SLT to help in their planning process; Matt agreed that it would satisfy their needs and will send 3 or more questions to be considered for inclusion. SLT's time frame to receive the responses is in 5 – 6 months' time. Tom said that conservation saves tax dollars in that we pay more in taxes than what is used in services; developed land uses more in services. He said that there is a mathematical model that he can share with us. SLT is structured so that it is answerable to its board and members; they are members of and adhere to the National Land Trust Alliance standards.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Community Meeting (Pie for Breakfast)- Jerry and Brent reported that the event was worth the effort and was successful. About a dozen or so people stopped at the MCC table. There was an opportunity afterwards to talk with several members of the Selectboard about our funding request. Brent proposed getting pricing to have an MCC sign (2'x4') made for future events and will get pricing for consideration.
2. MCC funding request with selectboard- The Select Board voted 4-1 to approve having an article in the upcoming budget, for voters to approve ¼ cent MCC funding (amounting to approximately \$28,864).
3. Educating voters of the need to vote yes for funding- MCC will use Front Porch Forum and the News and Citizen as outreach, to inform the public as to reasons to vote yes on the article. Jerry will send the talking points and letter used to request the Select Board's approval to Sandy and the rest of the group and she will handle posting the information on FPF; Pam will handle the N&C article and find out how much it would cost. Drafts of the postings and newspaper article to be circulated to all the members. Brent suggested a letter that is signed by the MCC members and as many as 15 or 20 other people in support of the funding article to be put in the N&C. Brent's neighbor Nancy Banks is willing to get signatures. Brent will work with Pam on the wording.
4. Fill vacancy left by Jess- Nancy Dunavan is interested in becoming a member and inquired about the process; Jerry told her that she would have to fill out a request on line and email it to Judi Alberi, as well as submit a resume or letter of qualifications. experience and interests to be reviewed by MCC members ahead of a formal interview; she can send it along with her contact information to Pam who will forward to the other members. Brent knows of other people who are also interested and will advise them as to the process.
5. Interest expressed by public to help with trail maintenance-Charles Samsonow, who was recommended by Gail Beck, helped the town during the turkey trot and voiced an interest in helping with trail maintenance. Pam suggested a sign-up sheet be posted in the town office; Brent will handle making a sign-up sheet and has an email list of volunteers. Jerry gave Brent Charles's email so that it may be added to the list
6. Other- Ron suggested making contact with the Boy Scout Master, David McCallister, and utilize the Scouts to help with trail maintenance and other outdoor activities. Ron will send Jerry David's contact information, get Jerry introduced to him. It would be good to attend one of their meetings which are held Sunday evenings.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Report by Jim on MSI Industrial Park party status- Jim is away; item tabled for next meeting.
2. Update on expanding the questionnaire via (survey monkey) and piggybacking with Wellness Committee- Pam spoke to Allison at the Wellness Committee table at the Community Meeting Day and learned how to use Google Survey with a QR code that doesn't require everyone to have Gmail. It is a public survey and has some drawbacks, but it is free and not limited as Survey Monkey. Pam will handle collaboration with SLT and the Wellness Committee. Jerry gave Pam the contact information for Allison. Pam will email a draft of the questions to the group for comment & revisions ahead of the next meeting so that it may be approved in February. We should consider breaking the questions up into 2 surveys to minimize the number of questions in each. An open-ended question where people may express their thoughts and opinions can be added to the bottom of the survey.
3. Copley Trail entrance discussion- Ron suggested he take a carpenter he knows by the name of Herbert Martin, to look at the site and provide an estimate to build a cut-off using pressure treated lumber, that we could fill in with crushed stone; Ron to report back at the next meeting. Funding TBD would have to come from other than the MCC.
4. Muddy Moose property at end of Cote Hill Rd.- See above.
5. Potash Brook and other streams naming- Ron explained the origins of this endeavor as the first step to explain to the Select Board what we're trying to accomplish by naming the streams, which is for the buffer zone laws to be applied to these streams. Ron will take comments into account, clean up grammar and make the streams easier to see and copy and revise the title by changing the word "STREAMS" to "BROOKS". Once the document has been revised and we approve it, we can ask the Select Board to approve it. We should be ready to make our request once the Select Board has completed the budget.
All comments should be sent to Ron via email.
6. Duhamel reforestation- Brent provided information on species and spacing of plantings that Ron had previously requested. Brent discussed the need for establishing a committee; potential members composed of Ron, Dave and Brent, Fran Sladek, Emily Potter, Peter Danforth, Ron Kelly (pest control specialist). A map would be needed which could be made from an aerial drone. Soil characteristics from soil analysis would have to be determined by soil conservationists. Advertisement in the N&S, getting Select Board and Town Manager approvals and determination as to whether Act 250 approval is required are prerequisites if MCC votes and approved to move forward. Ron mentioned the Fran Sladek would know if Act 250 approval is required, and said that this would most likely be a multi-year project. Brent believes this would be a good project to demonstrate to the town what the MCC does that is conservation.
7. Other- Ron reported he had 5 responses to his offer to take people on a historic walk to the Town Forest and 6 on Bugby Springs. Ron offered to follow-up with Dr. Lundblad about selling the property to the Town. Ron will draft a letter for MCC comments.

8:23PM – ADJOURN