

Morristown Conservation Commission- Draft Minutes* March 20,2025

Attendees: Jerry Throne, Sandra Zebal, Brent Teillon, Hilary Warner, Pam Stanyon

Members not present: Jim Pease, Dave Stevens

Guests: Ron Stancliff, Jess Zehngut, Evelyn Throne, Nancy Dunavan, Dick Sargent, Don McDowell, Judy Stancliff

Meeting opened at Town Hall at 5:02 PM

Ceremony of appreciation for Ron Stancliff's service to the MCC and Town of Morristown. Don McDowell opened by speaking of Ron's many contributions to the Town of Morristown and that we are here to honor him. Don went on to say that Ron was recently recognized by the Stowe Conservation Commission as their Conservationist of the Year. He has served our community on the Selectboard, DRB, Planning Commission, and MCC. "You've put your heart and soul into this town, lived here all your life." Additionally, Ron has donated land at Joe's Pond to UVM; worked with Ducks Unlimited, Arbor Day, and the Nature Conservancy; contributed to work days at the Town Forest; and participated in Legislative Breakfasts. "Ronny Chestnut-seed," as Don nicknamed him, has raised and planted hundreds of chestnut trees. "Your love for the town is evident. You always see the glass as half full."

Dick Sargent also spoke- he and Ron were in 1st grade together 80 years ago. He said Ron found a dugout canoe buried in mud at Joe's Pond and they worked on digging it out- thinking it was Indian Joe's canoe. It wasn't- but it is now at the historical museum. "Ron has always been interested in preserving our past. Ron has a long tradition of loving this town- he has conserved land in Stowe, on the Elmore Mtn Road, and at Joe's Pond. He's a real example for us all."

Ron was presented with a gift of a mirror, fashioned from a traditional snowshoe by Brent, and signed by MCC members and others.

A motion was made by Pam and seconded by Brent to approve the February 20 meeting minutes- the motion was approved unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Re-organization- elect officers- Chair, Clerk, Treasurer & Vice-Chair: Brent nominated Jerry as chair of the MCC. Unanimously approved. Brent nominated Jim Pease as Clerk, but since he was not present we will need to find out if he is willing to continue. Jerry nominated Brent as treasurer which was unanimously approved. Jerry said we are also required to have a Vice Chair in the event that the Chair is unable to perform their duties. We decided to ask Dave Stevens if he is willing to fill this role. Hilary volunteered to be the backup if he is not willing.

2. Bylaws- modification of Section VI(a) meeting time. Pam made a motion which was seconded by Brent to modify the bylaws such that we meet at 5 instead of 6:30 on the third Thursday of the month. The motion was approved unanimously.

3. Approval of funding Article & MCC plans - Voters approved the MCC funding article. What plans do we have for this money (\$28,864)? We currently have a money market account with a balance of about \$3320 and interest rate of 0.15% and a CD account with an interest rate of

4.03%. Brent spoke with Tina and Sara and learned that the Town will make the appropriations for the articles approved at Town Meeting after tax collection- around Nov. 1 but could be sooner if we wanted to add it to our existing CD during the 10 day grace period when it matures in October. Brent's understanding is that we can invest our money as we see fit but spending it requires Selectboard approval. Between now and the fall, we need to decide how much money we want to have in the money market account and in the CD. We might want to consider a new CD. We need to budget and determine expected expenses for the coming year. Potential expenses include \$3000 for planting at the gravel pit, possible costs associated with land conservation efforts, etc. Brent will continue his research with Tina & Sarah at the Town regarding our options, and will report back as to their advice. Brent urged members to be thinking about upcoming expenses.

4. Summer Rec. Camp field trip(s) to Town Forrest- inquiry from Gail Beck, Economic & Community Development Director- Gail Beck asked Brent if MCC could host activities at the Town Forest for kids enrolled in the Summer Recreation Camp. She is asking for at least 2 full days. Based on MCC member schedules, we are thinking July 10 and 31 would be best. 65 kids are expected, ages up to 13. We brainstormed possible interactive activities including a scavenger hunt (Brent suggested Kristen Connelly might be a good resource), tree/ plant/ bird identification, learning how a trail is built, learning stations that the kids rotate through, wildlife they might expect to see there, forest fire prevention and care with fire, a walk through the historical part of the forest, the history of how and why the Town Forest came to be, Brent said he could get an entomologist, Fran Sladyk to talk about forestry. Jerry will get back to Gail about all of this.

5. Window display: MCC is responsible for filling the Town Office window display until May 7. Evelyn and Jerry put posters and info in the windows for the short term. There is a leak furthest from the entrance door so we can't include anything that will get wet. Upcoming events include Earth Day on April 22, VT Arbor Day on April 25 (last Friday in April), and Green Up Day is May 3rd. Sandy suggested Googling to find more environmentally oriented celebrations and events in April/May. Evelyn and Sandy are going to work on a theme and Jerry will help with installation.

Other new business:

Ron said he will be getting some free American Chestnut seeds at the chestnut annual meeting in May. He will provide containers to start them along with 2 seeds for anyone interested.

Evelyn brought up the 2nd annual recycling presentation and the need to advertise and contact LRSWMD. Jerry suggested we should give ourselves more time and table for now. Possibly fall.

Old business:

1. **MSI Industrial Park hearing & approval to request Planning Commission to change wording of Section 485 to match the Town Plan.** Jerry and Jim attended the MSI hearing. Although MCC is allowed to advise the Dept of Environmental Conservation, the Town, and other entities, Jim only spoke briefly and Jerry didn't get the opportunity because the 5 hour hearing ran out of time. Jerry sent an e-mail to ANR and copied the town saying that he thought more time should be scheduled to allow comments.

There are inconsistencies between MSI legal team and the town and what is posted on ANR website for this application- MSI is saying they are permitted to do what they are doing because they are reading the Town Plan in a very narrow reading. Section 485 of

our zoning bylaws and the Town Plan are pretty specific about earth extraction. DEC never gets to the bylaws as long as the Town Plan is consistent and understandable- and it is. The town plan is clear, if it wasn't they can look at the bylaws. Jerry believes there needs to be clarification and, to reduce controversy about what the Town Plan says, Jerry would like the Planning Commission to change the bylaws to reflect what the Town Plan says. If MCC members agree, he is asking for permission to write a letter to the DRB and Planning Commission saying that if there is a conflict, the bylaws should be changed to match the town plan. Brent made a motion that Jerry write a letter to the Town stating that if the Section 485 bylaws conflict with the Town Plan, they should be revised so they are in conformance with the Town Plan. Motion by Pam and seconded by Brent was approved unanimously.

2. **Questionnaire- Google Survey & Survey Monkey:** Pam did a beta test with a Survey Monkey questionnaire and got 30 responses. Now she is working with Alison Link from Healthy Lamoille Valley and the M'town Wellness Committee to create a collaborative Google Survey with Stowe Land Trust and the Wellness Committee- the Google Survey tool has more flexibility and is less expensive. We discussed edits to the draft survey including: adding "hunter/trapper/angler" to #11, allowing ranking on #7, adding "non-resident" to #12, and adding "protecting working farms, river corridors and floodplains" to (#2 or 7). We discussed adding "land for housing and development" and opted not to.

3. **Copley Trail entrance:** Ron contacted carpenter Urban Martin and he suggested a landscaper would be a more appropriate professional for the project. Ron reached out to Mariah Keagy of Sinuosity Trails and asked if she had names of contractors who could make the trail entrance more accessible. We are looking for someone to provide an estimate and do the work.

4. **Muddy Moose property discussion with Tom Rogers at SLT:** Jerry met with Tom Rogers at Stowe Land Trust and they are very interested in looking at the property to see if it is something they can get behind. Brent has been in touch with Chuck Pepe- his trail vehicle has been repaired and he wants to know when we can tour the property. Brent needs phone numbers and names of folks who want to go. Jerry, Hilary, and Nancy are interested. Matt from SLT planned to come to this meeting but he got held up elsewhere.

5. **Potash Brook and other stream (re)naming.** Ron would like to invite members to accompany him traveling the roads and looking at the streams in Town. Prefers Sundays because less traffic. Goal is to create a publication we can forward to the Planning Commission.

6. **Duhamel reforestation plan:** Brent has created a 3 page plan for this and said he told Brent Raymond we are interested in doing the planting as long as it's approved by Act 250 and the Selectboard is in agreement. MCC is happy to talk with Selectboard about the plan if desired. Ron said we had considered getting a grant to fund this in the past- there is another \$700 Tiny Grant round coming up, applications due April. But the first step is getting a stamp of approval from the Selectboard and Town Manager.

7. **Filling MCC vacancy:** after reviewing her resume, members interviewed Nancy Dunavan for an open spot on MCC. She said nature has been a part of her life since she was a child. She is enthusiastic about and interested in conservation and has expertise in sales and marketing and grant writing. She thinks that educating the public about their natural community is valuable and important. She sees FPF as a great vehicle for this. She has reviewed the bylaws. MCC board deliberated in executive session, a motion was made and unanimously approved that we appoint Nancy as our next MCC member, pending Selectboard approval.

8. **MCC sign estimate, logo & tabletop display:** Brent got an estimate from Great Big Graphics for an MCC banner with grommets- \$152.46. There was discussion about design. Pam made a motion, seconded by Brent, that we have Great Big Graphics make a plain (yellow letters on green background) banner with space to apply a stick-on logo/decal when available. Ann Howard informed Hilary that she had not had time to prepare a logo draft for the meeting. Further discussion about a possible logo and the tabletop display was tabled. Brent would like the banner in time for Green Up Day.

9. **Trail maintenance sign-up sheet & Jerry to contact Scout Master-** tabled

10. **Further discussion from last meeting as to the need for a Trails Committee-** tabled

11. **Ron's on-line training session offer & someone to take over historical walks:** Ron offered to train MCC members on use of computer to glean information from town tax maps and ANR maps. He said he is receiving a weekly list of every document that was recorded in Town.

12. **Other:**

a. **Green Up Day:** Morrisville Soccer Club has inquired about whether or not they can raise money for their Euro trip bottle drive again in concert with Green Up Day. MCC has no objection to this. Brent is waiting for posters and will need help putting them up. In 2024, Vermont Green Up achieved a Guinness World Record for the most pledges for trash pick up in 24 hours. Brent will mentor Hilary on all things Green Up.

b. **Invasive Species Talk:** Association of VT Conservation Commissions is hosting a talk on 5/9. Let Jerry know if you are interested and he'll share details..

Public Comments: none

Adjourned at 7:05

*Note: Minutes are in draft form until approved by the members.