

WESTMINSTER CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meeting, Thursday, 10/26/23 at 7:15 P.M. via Zoom

1. Call to Order at 7:20 pm. Present: Kathy Kingston, Tatiana Schreiber, Rachael Shaw, Kestrel Craig, Sarah Waldo
2. Adjustments to Agenda: Add in Discussion of Cemetery Plantings to Other Business.
3. Acceptance of Minutes: 9/28/23 – Minutes accepted by unanimous consent. Correction in 9/28/23 minutes, section 7 a) should say chokeberry —not chokecherry.
4. Communications and Public Comment: none
5. Unfinished Business (Discussion / Action) –
 - a. Beaver Working Group/BEEC program – debrief from event, and status update
Very well-attended, one comment was that it was not about Westminster’s waterways specifically, but it was a very interesting and well-received program on the way that beavers alter and engineer waterways. Tatiana has some follow up questions for Denise Burchsted and will reach out to her via email: Is the beaver activity in WW village raising the groundwater level? Also, Tatiana currently has a high bacterial count in her well, which has been a common complaint (per Green Mountain Well) this summer with so much precipitation and wonders if that also could be due to high water table. Patti would like to move the event with Skip Lisle to the springtime, and in the meantime, discuss some possible beaver deceiver locations. There is need for a deceiver in a culvert on a private driveway that goes over the Barnes brook. There may be a way to get grant money to pay for that device. Clarification regarding Conservation Commission relationship to the Beaver Working Group. The project is spearheaded by BEEC. The Westminster Conservation Commission is one of many partners. Apparently a very large wetland in a remote area upland from Pine Banks Road had a large dam breach on Oct 1. The beavers are working on rebuilding the dam; there was tremendous loss of life and habitat.
 - b) Continue comments on Natural Resources section of TP -Kathy mentioned that there are only two people on the Planning Commission right now and that re-writing the new Town Plan is currently on hold. Kathy will check in with Bari (Planning Commission) and report back. We should continue to work on the NR section so it will be ready to be submitted when there is an active planning commission. Rachael will suggest dates in mid November for a working meeting to make comments on the NR section of the Town Plan as a small group.
 - c) Comments on Agriculture section of TP – Kathy will ask Seroya (former Planning Commission member) about the status of the draft agriculture section, and whether she anticipates that it will be used in the new Town Plan.
Sarah will research how Putney funded the help they got from an outside group to get input from the community on their town plan.
6. New Business:

- a) Green Burials -Discussion about green burial options in VT both in cemeteries and on private land. Sarah and Rachael will research the topic with the goal of writing an educational article in the Gazette.
- b) Upcoming project ideas.
 1. Wildlife corridors—Kathy will ask Ann Kerry in Putney about what this kind of mapping entails.
 2. Riparian buffers at Henwood Hill— Tatiana will contact Cory Ross and ask him how we would begin such a project.
 3. Following up on ideas from the Regional Conservation Commissions meeting, we are wondering how Guilford went about creating their Natural Resources inventory: Kathy will ask Patti how they achieved it. It would be an interesting project for our town, perhaps focusing on the areas that residents have identified as special or treasured areas (eg Henwood Marsh, Westminster West wetlands, Westminster upland forests, Connecticut River borders, etc).
 4. Tracking workshop sometime this winter.
7. Other Business: Westminster West Cemetery planting project- Sarah will ask Chris Potter how we would go about making a proposal to allow us to order some trees and shrubs. Kathy will follow up with Chuck about what he would like us to do. Then we can go about figuring out funding, (grant? Inclusion in cemetery care budget? Budget request from the Selectboard) and ordering plants for the spring.
8. Date of Next Meeting: November 30 (November 23 is Thanksgiving)
9. Adjournment at 8:35 pm.