

Westminster Conservation Commission
Meeting, Thursday, 12/04/25 at 7:00 P.M
In person: Westminster Institute

To join by Zoom, contact

westminstervtconservation@gmail.com

1. Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 7:05 pm. Present: Jim Calchera, Kestrel Craig, Tatiana Schreiber (chair), Amy Moreland, Rachael Shaw (secretary)
2. Adjustments to Agenda : no adjustments
3. Acceptance of Minutes: 10/30/25 – Minutes read and accepted by unanimous consent.
4. Communications and Public Comment:
 - a) Email communications –

Public communications for CC meeting 12/4/25

1. Email from Lou. CC members serve for 4 years; Rachael and Tatiana need to be reappointed. He will put on next SB agenda.
2. AVCC has newsletter, The Seedling. November issue attached. See email from 11/29 (in AVCC folder). Members encouraged to read when you get a chance. They are seeking “success stories” and input on what they should include. Write them: theseedling@vtconservation.org
3. A lot of communication on AVCC listserv about the new wetlands rules. Comment period is open. **Send comments to WetlandsRulemakingComment@vermont.gov before January 15th, 2026.** See the AVCC folder for emails with suggestions for comments to write. See especially email from Diane Reynolds dated 11/21. Also see email from Margo Ghia dated 11/14 which includes registration for in-person public meetings.
4. Discussion on AVCC listserv about conservation funds that some towns have set up to help CCs purchase and conserve land. Moved to AVCC folder. Different commissions have different processes, but several have robust conservation funds, so it would be good to look at how they did this. There are also some guidance

documents included in the emails that guide how the money is to be used. Jim will review these emails and report back.

5. Newsletter from Vermont Natural Resources Council (email dated 11/6) moved to “newsletters from other organizations” folder, discussed how Act 181 blends housing and conservation issues, and has links to some interviews about this.
6. See email from Jane Hoffman, dated 10/30 with a rodenticide resolution adopted by town of Greensboro. Maybe put this on agenda for an upcoming meeting – CC could do this, although may not be time to get it on meeting agenda for this year, need to gather signatures.
7. Newsletter from Ct River Conservancy, email dated 11/1, moved to “newsletters from other organizations” folder.

b) Rockingham CC minutes report - RCC is working on several issues that are similar to ours. They hosted a pre-meeting presentation called “Introduction to Land Conservation and Community Forests in Vermont”, presented by Hayden Smith, one of the RCC members. A recording is available. They are also submitting comments opposing proposal to relax the rules around developing wetlands. They mention taking an online course to review the state mandated municipal code of ethics. (It is not required for CC members, but encouraged.) Rachael will research this option.

5. Unfinished Business (Discussion / Action) –

a) Town Plan/CC input process - Mike McConnell, who is the consultant writing the Town Plan would like to meet with us. One issue to discuss is how to coordinate housing development with conservation issues. The CC will discuss the issues further (Tatiana will send some resources) at our January meeting, and invite Mike to our February meeting.

b) Planting by church – signage and maintenance – posts are in the ground. Kestrel has the materials to create it. Amy will have a heated garage soon where Kestrel can work on it.

i. plants to order- 2 out of 3 Nanking Cherries died, and although the 3rd one needs another to pollinate, they are not thriving there, so Tatiana will order two snowberry bushes from Fedco. They will arrive in the Spring.

c) Town Forest

i. Continue synthesis of public input from forum – last part of the report was our recommendations for next step: **Very important that by our next meeting we have all taken the time (schedule it in!) to synthesize our own thoughts so that we can make recommendations.** Comments are in synthesis tab in Town Forest Forum on the google drive.

ii. Follow-up re trails on Ginnever property -Jim sent out an email and the state lawyers from Fish and wildlife weighed in. There are no issues with liability for landowners re: trails, as long as there are no fees/commercial use. We should make sure trails aren't too close to the sculptures. Jim will look further into the possibility of grants to develop trails and send a synthesis of his research on liability to Jodi. The other piece is to look into liability for municipalities but it shouldn't be an issue. The landowner can place signs indicating any potential dangers, further reducing any potential liability.

6. New Business:

a) Welcome new member Amy Moreland -The CC thanks Amy for joining, and looks forward to working together.

b) AVCC 2026 invoice for dues was received. (October 30) – invoice sent to Town Manager. Makes us eligible for tiny grants, gives us access to the List Serve.

i. Appoint treasurer -Tatiana made a motion that we appoint Kestrel Craig to be treasurer, Amy seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Fiscal year started July 1. So far we've spent \$50 on the AVCC membership, and about \$100 on supplies for the Town Forest public forum. Kestrel will create a spreadsheet to monitor our funds/expenses.

c) Report back from F & W webinar/s on bears. Rachael attended. She will follow up with Jackie Comeau to try to get an article in the *Gazette* in early Spring on sensible ways to prevent human/bear conflict.

d) Report back from Dept. of Environmental Conservation watershed planning webinar – Kestrel attended. There is a tactical basin plan for each watershed that is revised every 5 years. Marie Caduto is in charge of revision of Basin 11 (Saxtons, Williams and West). Outside of developed areas, the water quality is good. They removed 3 dams in the watershed this summer and they are looking to remove more. Elizabeth Bowman of the WCNRCDC excited to hear about black gum trees in the Westminster Town Forest, and wants to visit. Marie would be happy to do water testing

at the East Putney Brook, Beaver pond (heron rookery area), and black gum wetland area. Kestrel will follow up and ask what kind of conditions would be needed to do the testing. Marie was interested to hear about the wetland status in Westminster West village and Tatiana will follow up with her.

e) Report back on Vermont Urban and Community Forestry (UVM) Program grant opportunity – Amy attended this, and reports that the Communities Caring For Canopies grant (\$5000 - \$10,000, 1-1 match) deadline is Jan 30. They prioritize projects that involve a community event. They give a lot of guidance/tools for outreach. We will add developing a proposal to the agenda (for an upcoming round, not the Jan 30).

f) Winter tracking event planning - Planned for Saturday Feb 7 10:30 -12:30 pm. Weather date Feb 8. Rachael will follow up with Paul Harlow about the Greenwood farm for a location. Press release will specify to register so as to be alerted of any changes due to weather conditions.

7. Other Business: none
8. Date of Next Meeting: January 23 Westminster West Library
9. Adjournment at 8:30 pm

Minutes respectfully submitted by

Rachael Shaw, secretary