

WESTMINSTER CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meeting, Thursday, 1/22/26 at 7:00 P.M

In person: Westminster West Library

To join by Zoom, contact

westminstervtconservation@gmail.com

1. Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 7:04 pm.

Present: Tatiana Schreiber, Rachael Shaw, Kestrel Craig, Jim Calchera, Amy Moreland

2. Adjustments to Agenda- Add: collaboration possibility with Brattleboro CC to Other Business (discuss if time)

Add: discuss how other CCs are funded from information that Jim compiled (discuss if time)

3. Acceptance of Minutes: 12/04/25 – 6 min. Minutes read and accepted by unanimous consent with one change: In 6 part d. Name is Isabel Bowman, not Elizabeth Bowman.

4. Communications and Public Comment:

a) Email communications – Regarding all the newsletters that we receive in our WCC gmail inbox, such as VECAN, VNRC, Vermont Urban and Community Forestry, (You’ve Got Tree Mail), AVCC (The Seedling), Connecticut River Conservancy, etc.- Tatiana has been organizing relevant programs/opportunities to share with the WCC for each meeting. Amy offered to read them and flag key items to share with the WCC. We are all free to regularly check the gmail inbox.

Emails summarized by Tatiana:

1. Karen Saunders, Brattleboro Conservation Commission, would like to know if we would like to collaborate on iNaturalist's April City Nature Challenge (CNC), which challenges people to find nature in urban and small town settings. There would be intro to iNaturalist and the Challenge, and an ID period get-together to identify observations. Our role would be to help get the word out about this. The observation period is April 24-27, with a follow-up ID period from April 28-May 10. We could hold a mini-bioblitz walk someplace where neighborhood observations can be made - or someplace where participants could get riparian observations, given that the Connecticut River Conservancy is a partner. More details in 12/13 email.
2. VNRC newsletter (Dec) moved to “newsletters” folder. Lots of info on dam removal projects around the state.
3. Vermont Watershed Grant applications - deadline Feb 4th, Email moved to grants folder. The 2026 Vermont [Watershed Grants Program](#) is accepting applications for projects that protect, restore and enhance the state's lakes, streams, rivers, and ponds, including Vermonters’ ability to understand and enjoy these treasures. Applications are due no later than 5 p.m. Wednesday February 4, 2026. We should consider applying next year.
4. Urban and Community Forestry Program newsletter. Lots of interesting stuff (moved to “newsletters” folder). Includes compilation of ash borer results in 2025; More here: <https://vtcommunityforestry.org/community-stories/2025-updates-regarding-emerald-ash-borer-vermont>

5. VECAN (Vermont Climate Action Network) newsletter, moved to “newsletters.” Lots of important info there. Including this: Climate Catalyst Innovation Fund - 2024-25 Report of Awardees The Vermont Council on Rural Development’s Climate Catalyst Innovation Fund supports local innovative climate projects for which a small grant could have a meaningful impact at the community level. In this round, \$60,500 in grants ranging from \$500 to \$4,000 were awarded to 17 local projects developing solutions that move Vermont closer to its climate and energy goals. The report describes outcomes of fourth round projects in the words of the awardees, [read it here](#).
6. Another VECAN newsletter “three things” (see email 1/15 now moved to newsletters). This includes a report they compiled on a roadmap to reduce pesticide use in Vermont. And yet another VECAN newsletter (dated 1/12 - January newsletter), this one left in inbox. Lots of good updates on statewide environmental issues.
7. VT Fish and Wildlife: Environmental Leadership Training - two three-session online programs. Still time to sign up but first one starts soon. To register, contact Jens.Hilke@vermont.gov
8. VT Fish and Wildlife spring Community Wildlife Program webinars. See email 1/22/26. These look interesting. See their webinars page: tfishandwildlife.com/Current There’s also one on regional land use mapping.
9. Coming right up, The Windham County Natural Resources Conservation District is hosting a Working for Wildlife webinar to explore habitat restoration in our waterways and how you can get involved. On January 28th from 5 - 6pm, a panel will cover topics such as Beaver Dam Analogs, pollinator and tree plantings, and wetland restoration planning! This looks really interesting! Hopefully someone can go. Learn more and RSVP [here](#). See 1/21/26 email from Isabel Bowman. This email left this one in the inbox.
10. CT River Conservancy newsletter (moved to newsletters). Lots of interesting info including meetings about the state “Flood Safety Act” and local efforts to address flooding. Unfortunately the southeast VT region meeting is tonight. Also this: CRC will once again host the Wild and Scenic Film Festival at the Bellows Falls Opera House on April 30, 2026. Looking for volunteers from Windham County area to help with supporting the Festival. Time commitment would be a few hours a week between February and April, and support the night of the Film Festival on April 30. If interested in helping, please email Bay Holmes at bholmes@ctriver.org.
11. VECAN webinar Wednesday, Jan 18th related to ongoing further progress to deploy renewable resources, reduce energy bills, hold polluters accountable for the damages their products have caused and do our part to combat the increasingly costly climate crisis. Left this one in inbox. Email from 1/20/26.
12. Road salt meeting - this meeting happened - we didn’t go, but could contact the speakers for more info? Maybe we can get recording. Meeting Description: The use of salt to prevent ice from forming on roads and other surfaces is important to protect public safety, but salt can negatively impact the environment, including our waterways. Join us for an interactive session designed for municipal snowplow crews, local leaders, board members, and anyone interested in supporting snow and ice management best practices.

This presentation will feature town-to-town learning and sharing, along with practical guidance on low-salt best practices that keep roads, parking lots, and driveways safe while reducing salt use to protect the environment, preserve infrastructure, and cut costs. Speakers: Kris Stepenuck (UVM Extension) & Todd Eaton (VT Agency of Transportation) For questions contact Lincoln Frasca at frasca@cvregion.com

After this summary, we discussed adding to a future agenda getting more organized around our fundraising activities/grant writing etc. We could set up a spreadsheet of upcoming grant opportunities and deadlines, and also develop a list of project ideas to see which ones would fit with which grant opportunities.

b) Rockingham CC minutes report - Rachael reported from the RCC 1/13/26 meeting minutes.

They mentioned that VT law changed in 2025 so that power from an array can only go to adjacent properties. (We should research solar array VT law- how does this affect future community solar projects?)

Mike Ghia is stepping down as RCC chair in April, having served since 2009.

They discussed how they might break up the Riverfront Trail extension project into smaller phases that might be funded by other grants with lower maximum requests. The cheapest of the 3 trail options considered by StanTech would cost \$645K plus right of way costs; the more preferred option (2) would cost \$930K.

They may also coordinate with BCC's iNaturalist City Challenge.

Jeff Nugent organized a county-wide trails meeting for Wed 1/21 starting at 5 pm at the Prouty Center. If you are interested and not on his list, please write to him at jnugent@windhamregional.org

They noted that there will be a regional Windham County CC meeting in February or March.

5. Unfinished Business (Discussion / Action) –

- a) Planting by church – signage and maintenance – Amy's garage has heat now, Kestrel and Amy will coordinate to create signage.
 - i. New plants have been ordered. Tatiana will send the amount spent to Kestrel. Tatiana will request reimbursement when she gets billed (in the Spring).
- b) AVCC dues received- Dues were paid by the Town for the current fiscal year.
- c) Follow-up re DEC watershed planning- no follow up yet. Tatiana will contact Marie Caduto regarding West West village wetland issues
- d) winter tracking event - Rachael will email Paul Harlow and ask if we can use the Greenwood farm for our workshop. Rachael will advertise in the Front Porch Forum and has resubmitted the press release to the Gazette.
- e) Town Forest
 - i. Affirm synthesis report to share with SB - Reviewed report and made minor edits. Jim made a motion to accept the Town Forest Synthesis Report as written. Kestrel seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Tatiana will submit to the SB and ask them to let us know when they put it on an agenda so that we can attend that meeting.

- ii. Follow-up re trails on Ginnever property –no further update.
- f)Town Plan/CC input process – discussion in preparation for Mike McConnell conversation at next CC meeting - What are our priorities? We will discuss with him which sections of the plan the CC would either have responsibility for and/or be consulted for guidance. **We should all go over our previous comments on the former draft plan by Feb 15 and move any comments that we would like to discuss with Mike into the “Town Plan Input”file in the Town Plan folder on the Google drive.**
- 6. New Business: Re: Wood duck box install. Jim said we will discuss further at the tracking event and should target February or early to mid March for the installation. Should be plenty of ice to get out on beaver pond.
- 7. Other Business:
 - 1. If time, discuss Jim’s compilation of how other CCs are funded - postponed, add to agenda for next meeting.
 - 2. If time, discuss collaboration with Brattleboro CC on Nature City Challenge. April 24-27. Tatiana made a motion that we would collaborate with the Brattleboro CC for the Nature City Challenge. Kestrel seconded. Motion accepted with unanimous consent. Tatiana will let them know.
- 8. Date of Next Meeting: Feb 26th, 7 pm, Westminster Institute
- 9. Adjournment at 8:34 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by
Rachael Shaw, secretary