

## WESTMINSTER CONSERVATION COMMISSION

### Meeting, Thursday, 3/26/26 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 7:05 pm. Present: Tatiana Schreiber, (chair) Kestrel Craig, Amy Moreland, Rachael Shaw (secretary), Jim Calchera
2. **Adjustments to Agenda** Add in discussion of salamander crossings to Other Business. Add in Road Salt Testing information to Unfinished business.
3. **Acceptance of Minutes: 2/26/26** – Minutes read and accepted by unanimous consent with corrections: in part 7, Other business: recruitment flyers not recruitment poster.
4. **Communications and Public Comment:**
  - a) Email communications –Tatiana went over the many emails that have been received. They are available in our Google Drive. Amy went over her summary of key information from all of the newsletters received. The summary is available in the CC gmail, and will be moved to the drive.. There are many upcoming events, opportunities, and webinars.
  - b) Rockingham CC minutes report - Rachael reviewed what the RCC has been up to. They are working on bike/hike trails, outstanding waters designations, and tabling at the Herrick's Cove festival. They lost one member and welcomed a new member.
5. **Unfinished Business (Discussion / Action) –**
  - a. Report backs Conservation Listening plan sessions – Tatiana has been to three listening sessions on the Vermont Conservation Plan (result of Act 59) The Vermont Housing and Conservation board has been working on this plan for three years and now has a draft framework to achieve the goal of 30 X 30 and 50 X 50. There are three main objectives. Objective 1: Center [Vermont Conservation Design](#) – this is a conservation program developed by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department whose main idea is that conservation should be implemented so that land can carry out its ecological function; Objective 2: Conservation for communities. How does conservation serve and become

accessible to communities- agriculture, recreation, community land; Objective 3: -strengthen conservation capacity - how do we do this practically, funding grants, technical assistance etc.. Tatiana suggested that each person go to [vermontconservationplan.com](http://vermontconservationplan.com) pick one of the three objectives that is of most interest and try to understand the pathways and proposed actions. People can then make comments directly on the website. . People can also write comments and submit them by email to Comments are due on March 31. Comments become part of the public record. At the listening session in Bellows Falls, there was also information shared about what all the local CCs are working on. Tatiana will send that document once received from WRC.

- b. Standing Trees Listening Session— this group advocates to allow more forest to grow old. They pointed out their critiques of the plan, which they also helped develop, but they have concerns about how it has evolved. Over the last year the amount of conserved land has been inventoried, and supposedly we are already at 27% conserved land (4% is in ecological reserves; 4% is actively managed conservation land; the remainder natural resource conservation areas including agriculture and forest land that have conservation easements) where the goal is 30%. They are advocating for more land to be put into the ecological research category, to allow more trees to mature. They also point out that much of the conserved land is in temporary conservation status that could change.
- c. BEEC and the Green Mountain Conservancy hosted another listening session which was presented by someone from the VHCB. The hosting organizations did not present their own views. The VHCB presented the plan as they see it, which helped to clarify the sometimes complex language. The presentation was followed by breakout groups. Tatiana attended one on protecting water quality. This was held at the Retreat on 3/24, 3 hours with a break for dinner.

b) Town Plan input process –Mike McConnell came to the last CC meeting and then sent us some documents which are in the Google drive under Town Plan. To have more time to adequately contribute our suggestions on these documents, a special meeting/working was set for 10-11:30 Sunday April 19 at the Westminster West Library. If it needs to be warned, Tatiana will warn it.

c) Follow-up re DEC watershed planning – Kestrel arranged with Marie Caduto and Isabel Bowman to meet on May 15 at 1 pm to take water samples at beaver pond and Black Gum area. Suggestion to start at Ginniver property off Quarry Road, Jim will check in with the renters who live there.

d) Grant Development –

1. AVCC Tiny Grant (due April 11) subcommittee (Tatiana, Jim, Amy) met to develop the proposal, and solicited a letter of support from the Selectboard (which was received). The proposal will ask for \$800. The budget still need to be determined. The sub-committee will meet again on April 6th, 6 pm. They adapted the grant that we submitted last year and did not receive. They took out the release of trees, and focused on constructing a kiosk, developing education materials, planning for the parking area trailhead, engaging volunteers and hosting a ribbon cutting event, all in the Town Forest.

2. Process for future grants- Will discuss in the subcommittee meeting and/or at the next regular meeting.

e) Town Forest – planning for SB meeting – The CC requested to be on the agenda of the April 28th meeting. Discussed what it would mean for the CC to be appointed as official steward of town forest. Tatiana noted that there was a good article on controversies around forest management in a recent issue of *The Vermont Digger*.

F) Road Salt Testing Info- Rachael ordered and received a salt testing kit and shared the instructions with the group.

6. **New Business:**

a) Ephemeral Plant walk planning - Saturday May 9th, 10 am. Rachael will get permission from the owners to walk the sugarbush in the Hidden Springs area, and will advertise in the *Gazette* and the Front Porch forum.

7. **Other Business:** Salamander crossing discussion- information available on the BEEC website. CC members shared information on key crossing areas in Westminster West. Drive carefully home tonight!

8. **Date of Next Meeting:** April 23rd 7 pm, Westminster Institute.

9. **Adjournment at 8:41 pm.**

**Minutes respectfully submitted by**

**Rachael Shaw, secretary**