

WESTMINSTER CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING

Thursday Oct 22nd, 2026 7 PM

In person: Westminster Institute

To join by Zoom, contact
westminstervtconservation@gmail.com

1. Call to Order meeting called to order at 7 pm. Present: Jim Calchera (acting chair), Kestrel Craig, Amy Moreland, Rachael Shaw (secretary), guests Jessie Chickering, Izaak Pellerin. Absent: Tatiana Schreiber.
2. Adjustments to Agenda : Add follow up on low salt application signs to Other Business.
3. Acceptance of Minutes: 9/24/26 – minutes from 9/24/26 accepted by unanimous consent.
4. Communications and Public Comment:
 - a) Email communications/newsletter summary - Amy noted three significant emails that members can follow up on.
 - 1) AVCC- action Vt F&W board is looking for comments re: extending the bobcat trapping season. Also 85% of bobcats are testing positive for second gen-anticoagulant.
 - 2) Vermont Municipal Planning Guide webinar re: planning for climate change— Amy will attend on Nov 10.
 - 3) CT River conservancy- this past event was the 30th anniversary of Source to Sea Clean Up. 1500-2000 people volunteered across 140 groups.
5. Unfinished Business (Discussion / Action) –
 - a) Church planting, sign and maintenance - report back 10/18 event - We had four CC members and 4 volunteers come work for approximately 2 hours. Hillside is looking vibrant and healthy. Rachael will bring wood chips to spread around shrubs. Kestrel will be re-painting the sign.
 - b) Town Forest AVCC grant planning
 1. Review neighbor comments from 9/24 - Primary issue raised was increased road usage/deterioration. Attending neighbors agreed that this is the main issue. Also there is no public parking. Ben Masure, Road Foreman and Jim drove out yesterday. Currently, East Putney Brook Road in Westminster West is East Putney Rd is presently a Class 3 road north of the town plow truck turnaround area (Phil Pellerin's sawmill area) and the road is Class 4 south of that point. It would be possible to bring the Class 4 portion up to Class 3(expensive) or Class 4 standards, but there is a cost issue either way, plus an equity issue re: other class 4 roads wanting similar maintenance. We will continue to research possibilities re: how to make this forest more accessible to the community.

Access from the Putney end would require involving the town of Putney. Access from Quarry Road area is an option but where to put parking remains an issue. Either way, an informational kiosk can be installed near the entrance to the former log landing on the Westminster West side. This will probably not be installed until the Spring.

2. Next steps - Jim will contact Stephen Major to work on a materials list. Izaak Pellerin has offered to mill up some lumber. John Williams will donate some locust posts. We planned a short hike to check out the soils of the log landing on Nov 7. We will meet at the West West School at 9am for carpooling. Bring digging implements to check out the soil quality. It would be good to have another kiosk at the entrance on the other side of the forest.

c) Rodenticide campaign planning - Tatiana said Michelle Bos-Lun has a list of potential speakers. Subcommittee of Amy, Rachael and Tatiana will continue the planning. The RCC was willing to co-sponsor. Will plan for a winter program. It would be good to start keeping a list of where we see rodenticide boxes, so as to communicate with these places when viable alternatives are available. It would be interesting to check in with local farmers re: what their options are.

e) Town Plan input process - went through the last few pages of the Town Plan and made comments. Amy will record the comments in the document. We are finished with our comments!

6. New Business:

a) Report back VT Fish & Wildlife land conservation webinar - Jim sat in on this webinar on Land Conservation. Jens Hilke introduced, and there were two presenters: Bob Heiser (Vt Land Trust) Kate Wanner (Trust for Public Land). Discussion of how they get federal and state lands conserved. We could send supporting letters as a CC for preserving land in Windham and Londonderry. Vermont Conservation Design website is a good resource. (Instrumental in Dorset state land conservation). Kate said two thirds of Vermont towns have town forests. We could get guidance from both of these organizations. Noted that an 1100 acre town forest on Ascutney Mountain added 775 acres to the forest with help from the Trust for Public Land. This is being managed as a young old growth forest, ie. leave it be.

Vermont Land Trust has a team that follows up on conservation easements, and the restrictions therein. We will need someone to reach out to the Vermont Land Trust and the Trust for Public Land to ask how they could help us move forward to conserve the Westminster Town Forest. They encourage groups to think big when planning to conserve land (Buy more acreage, collab with land owning neighbors to make conserved parcel larger, expect private donors, apply for grants). Add this to the agenda for the next meeting to determine next steps in making sure the Town Forest becomes conserved land. Jessie mentioned that the VLT website has maps that show all the conserved land in Vermont, including that conserved by other organizations.

7. Other Business: add in asking Ben Masure about putting up the low salt application signs on the Westminster West Road. Rachael will ask Ben if he's going to put up any signs this fall.

Next meeting we will schedule a duck box clean out date, and discuss putting up a new duck box, possibly in the Westminster west wetland. This would have to happen during winter when there is ice on the wetlands.

8. Date of Next Meeting: Date Dec 3, (note week change due to holidays) 7 PM,
Westminster West Library

9. Adjournment at 8:30 PM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by
Rachael Shaw, secretary