

## STRAFFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Minutes 26 April 2016

Present at the Justin Morrill Education Building at 7 p.m. were Commission Members: Mike Hebb, Tii McLane, Jared Jenisch, Kate Root and Steve Willbanks (Chair). Also present Crossroads Academy 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, faculty and members of the public.

Guest Speakers: The 8<sup>th</sup> graders from Crossroads Academy made a team-presentation about their remarkable progress to date in understanding and propagating lady slippers. These increasingly rare native New England orchids are notoriously difficult to reestablish once they disappear from a site and these young scientists have gained a remarkable amount of insight into the life-cycle of the plants. Their goal is to develop a model to enable others to successfully propagate the unique plants. So far, they have successfully propagated approximately 8,000 showy lady slipper seedlings. The Crossroad Academy students have received a nationally competitive grant from Johns Hopkins University, made a presentation of their research to the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) in Washington, D.C., and will be inducted into the American Junior Academy of Science.

With assistance from Strafford Conservation Commission member Mike Hebb, the students have been testing the viability of their propagation model in Strafford's Town Forest. After the presentation, audience comments were extremely complimentary.

SCC Meeting:

\*Approved 3/22/'16 Minutes.

\*Trails, etc.: Mike—

Signs are up at either end of the new 'Morrill link' between the Town House Trail and the Cross-Strafford Trail. This trail follows on old Town road for the first mile or so and is a convenient and pleasant hike for visitors to the Morrill Homestead.

\*Wetlands: Kate, Jared—

There was a discussion about merging the two wetlands groups and organizing spring and summer investigations.

\*Speakers—

Several possibilities were discussed.

\*Updates:

Podunk WMA timber-cut is completed, but the logger needs to clean up the site later in the spring.

\*Next Meeting—

May meeting postponed from 5/24 to 5/31.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Willbanks, acting Secretary