

Stafford Conservation Commission

MINUTES

October 24, 2023

7:00 PM at 201 Justin Morrill Mem Hwy

Kate Bass, Anne Fayen, Mike Hebb, Micki Colbeck present.

J.T. Erbaugh, Kitty Mackie, Erin Younger, Steve Faccio, Courtney Potter not present.

1. Approved minutes from September meeting with one typo.
2. Flood hazard and zoning informational meeting two Saturdays ago at Newton school. Micki attended and felt like the new bylaws and flood mitigation plan would be an improvement over what we have now. No one at the SCC attended the infrastructure meeting. What would throwing up roads look like, and would there be push back? What do you do if there were families living on the roads now? Class 3 roads must be plowed. Must be up to a certain spec before the town will take on a road.
3. Discussion on preserving Whitcomb and Cobb from future "takings". Steve Faccio and J.T. Erbaugh might talk to Don Graham about amending the deeds to reflect the promises that were made by the Selectboard to protect the natural areas we oversee from further encroachments. Kate is on record as opposing the compromise we made with the Drift Skippers. She worries that not being able to honor donors' wishes when a special interest group has the approval of the selectboard might become a problem in the future.
4. Alternate snowmobile trail approved by the selectboard at Whitcomb property. Voting for: David Paganelli, John Freitag, Jeff Solsa. Opposed: Hannah Levinger. Steve Faccio is SCC point man. The trail that Mike Mann and Mike Hebb laid out is far better than the original trail which would have gone right over the scenic overlook, and which had been wrongly approved by the selectboard without a warning or a discussion or consulting with the SCC.
5. Manning farm trails. Michael Sacca may agree to be trail manager until we take it on. He's scheduled for November 28<sup>th</sup> meeting to inform us of the trail. Anne said her neighbors, Ben Guest and Masha Bekhtereva may be interested. Perhaps invite them to our next meeting. What does trail manager responsibilities look like? Maybe Michael can meet with them and walk the trail. To be on Trail-finder one needs a manager. Maybe, we would choose not to be on Trail-finder in respect of Amy and Earl's farming operation.
6. Healthy rivers presentation. Kate talked to Rudi Rudell about a town presentation. He would be honored. Eric Donaldson would too. A one-night discussion on rivers. Maybe at the library. How to protect our rivers and what to do to prepare for flooding. Preserving meanders and access to floodplains. Kate would do this. A Tuesday in January. Perhaps a river clean-up in the spring.

7. Grant to hire YCC to improve OCF. John F. and Melissa would work with us. Identify our needs for future grants. Plant native shrubs around the parking area at Old City Falls with identification tags and information about who benefits from these plants.
8. The film was a huge success. We received enough donations to pay the \$65 rental fee and give Paul Kiffner the rest for doing the sound. Thank you all.
9. Invasive species removal at the library happened on Sunday, October 22. A lot of burning bush was successfully pulled by John Echeverria, Courtney and Jared Shaw, Anne Fayen, Kate Bass, and Micki Colbeck. Anne asks if we would fund purchasing burlap for covering some plants too big to pull. We agreed.
10. Some folks have cut through Coburn/Jamieson property to hike Cross Town Trail. May need a sign. John Freitag and Tracey will talk to the state about opening trail access. Right now, it is taped off. Micki told Chrissy we will keep an eye on this and not let it become a problem.
11. Trail news from Mike: Walked boundary of Whitcomb with Steve Faccio. Walked with JT around Cobb. Ed Huang and Mike put boards on the wet place by pines on the east trail. He and his wife will take over Cobb forest trail maintenance. Mike ran into the Green Mtn. Club on Whitcomb trail. Kitty and Mike did Pennock to Alger brook trail and Mike put new blaze markings. Up towards the end of Taylor Valley, the Ledges trail goes to the left. The Taylor Valley trail goes to the right. Only use yellow ribbons for our trails. Other colors signify other things.
12. Other business. Anne had the plaque to honor Barb and Wally Smith. She will mount it at the Pocket Park. We had previously voted to cover the \$85 charge.
13. Next meeting Nov 28<sup>th</sup>.
14. Meeting adjourned.