

Strafford Conservation Commission

Minutes

March 25, 2025

Strafford Town Office 7:00 PM

Micki Colbeck, Anne Fayen, Courtney Potter, Kate Bass, Steve Faccio, Erin Yunger, JT Erbaugh,
Mike Hebb

Also attending: David Paganelli, Donna Foster, Kerri Rainville, Jonathan Nedeau

- Approved minutes from January 28, 2025, meeting.
- Kerri Rainville is planning a possible overnight(s) backpacking hike with Newton school students, 5th grade and older on the town trails. This first year may be limited, but she is hoping it could become a yearly event. Possibly at the end of August, camping on state land at Podunk. The SCC has volunteered to help.
- David Paganelli and Donna Foster talked about the possibility of putting our Town Forests into conservation to protect them from ever being sold or degraded. The Ashley Community Forest already has a conservation easement, but the Cobb Town Forest and Whitcomb Hill do not. It has been suggested we unify protections for Town Forests, as all three are governed differently. Ashley has a board and receives no funding from the town but has a designated fund, and a conservation easement. It can never be subdivided or sold. The cost would be a one-time fee anywhere from \$20 to 50k and would go to the Vermont Land Trust which would enforce the easement forever. Some of that money could be from Vermont Conservation grants and some from fundraising. We would need community support and feedback. There is a possibility of getting it on a ballot. We should have a budget which would come from the town and possibly designate a Town Forest Board to govern these areas. Ashley has a ten-year plan. They must submit a

budget to the town so it can be approved. Conservation easements are in the deed and run for the history of the land. Involves a legal process with documents that run with the land. No mining, dumping, excavation etc. Approval process for resources such as solar, cell towers. Easements are mostly for agricultural purpose. They have a series of criteria that we would need to go through depending on size and location. The management plan is where we spell out details, and that requires public input. The County forester helps with the management plan. It would be best to join Cobb and Whitcomb together, but that may be tricky. Donna can help with grants. Steve is working on getting the fen listed as class one wetland area.

We voted to go forward with the process. All members approved.

- Other: Levi will attend our next meeting to give a presentation on his nature explorations.
- Kate did some research into the hazards of feeding wild waterfowl and is willing to talk to someone who is feeding them.
- Next meeting April 22, 2025
- Meeting adjourned.