

STRAFFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

August 27, 2019

Minutes

Present at the Morrill Education building at 7pm were commission members: Mike Hebb, Micki Colbeck, Kate Root, Dave Paganelli, Chuck Sherman, and Steve Willbanks, Chair.

- MINUTES from June 25, 2019 were approved.
- COBB TOWN FOREST: The town delivered hard pack to the parking area adjacent to the Cobb Trailhead and were commended for their fine job. Mike and Dave are tackling the patches of Glossy Buckthorn and have organized a work bee for Sept. 4th, 8 a.m.
- OLD CITY FALLS: Steve praised the Girl Scouts' recent presentation and the overall very high quality of the work they did in the OLC Recreation Area. Steve will send a letter of thanks to the Girl Scouts. Micki was thanked and commended for her involvement with these girls. Micki's Story Map of OCF area is finished and up for viewers to see. Many members commented that her work is very impressive and a valuable contribution to our town.
- WHITCOMB HILL TOWN FOREST: Mike and Shawn Ward have mowed and cleared brush. Both were thanked for their time and efforts. It's looking great up there.
- COBURN TRAIL: Several SCC members hiked the trail before the meeting to assess its condition and afterwards discussed whether we wanted to take over the maintenance of the trail and picnic area. Because of its neglected condition, there was a consensus that the SCC should offer to take care of it. Steve will speak with the Coburn family and with the Upper Valley Land Trust.
- PODUNK: Tim Appleton has replaced John Buck as the new Forest and Parks wildlife biologist assigned to this area of the state and he will be attending our next meeting. Regarding Podunk Pond in the Podunk WMA, it was noted that someone had recently opened up the road to motor vehicles by clearing away trees and other debris that had prevented motorized access to the pond. Tim will discuss Podunk Pond issues and also the Clover Hill Management Area. Micki noted that she had been part of a plant survey that they had identified many rare and unusual plants in that area, but to protect them, she had promised not to reveal their locations.
- ASHLEY COMMUNITY FOREST: A brief update was provided by David. A draft of an interlocal contract between Strafford and Sharon is being prepared. One important provision of the interlocal contract would require that the Trustees of Public Funds for the towns would share oversight of the budget and the dispersal

of funds. The Strafford Selectboard may soon be asked schedule a Special Town Meeting to vote on the acceptance of the Ashley parcel or it may be decided to wait until Town Meeting in March. If the Ashley parcel is accepted by both towns, property taxes for each town would be approximately \$360/year.

- It was agreed that the Conservation Commission's page on the Town's Website is looking great. All are encouraged to view it. Thanks should go to Micki and Mike for their contributions to it.
- WETLANDS: No new news.
- OLD BUSINESS: 1-Much discussion on the SCC Management Plans. The Selectboard prefers a fixed document and many on the SCC feel a more flexible document would be easier to update and more practical to use. David reminded us that an important purpose of the management plan is to alert the Selectboard in advance of upcoming timber sales. 2- The Selectboard will be asked to allow the two SCC Reserve Funds in the General Fund to be transferred to the Town's Trustees of Public Funds.
- NEW BUSINESS: Micki requested that the SCC post a letter on the listserve requesting that the Newton School PTA suspend frog jumping contests at the annual 4th of July parade celebrations. She felt that it was a cruel practice and showed insensitivity to wildlife. Discussion followed and eventually Micki said she felt the letter should reflect a consensus of opinion. She offered to draft the letter and circulate it around before our September meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Kate Bass Root