

STRAFFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

July 25, 2017

Minutes

Present at 7:30 p.m., at Martha Manheim's house, were SCC members: Mike Hebb, David Paganelli, Kate Root, Chuck Sherman, J.T. Horn and Steve Willbanks, Chair.

Note: Both the time and location were changed to avoid conflicts with other local events, including a reception that evening at the Morrill Homestead by the Friends of the Morrill Homestead. Our thanks to Martha Manheim for making her house available to us.

- June 27, '17 Minutes were moved, seconded and approved.
- There was a formal motion to proceed with a fundraising campaign to procure a 4-foot granite bench with a bronze plaque to be placed on the Strafford Common in memory of John Hemenway. The goal is to raise a minimum of \$1,000. If up to \$1,600 is raised, a bench with back will be purchased. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.
- In a related matter, there was discussion about creating a scenic picnic area near the river in Taylor Valley, also in memory of John.
- It was also decided to ask the full Conservation Commission to help with the wording of the Hemenway plaque. It should be short and simple. Suggestions included: 'John Hemenway (1924-2016)/Conservationist and Citizen of Strafford,' and, using a term from John's book about Taylor Valley, 'John Hemenway (1924-1916)/ A Man Who Lived in Forest Time. 'Forest Time' means long-term thinking and planning over the life span of a forest rather than over the life span of a human.
- A new landowner on Whitcomb Hill, below the town-owned portion, has made complaints about inappropriate and destructive use of the access to the top of Whitcomb Hill by motorized vehicles. Mike investigated, but couldn't substantiate the complaints.

- Tim McCormick, who oversees the Old City Nature Area, noted several issues of concern last month: deteriorating hemlock steps, a crack in the outdoor grill and picnic tables showing deterioration. Sherm Wilson, who installed the steps, reported that he thought they could hold up for another season and said he would plan to replace them. Mike Hebb filled in the stove-pipe hole in the grill with concrete and replaced the wood on one table. He said the other table should be able to last awhile longer. (The Town had also received a report from their insurer at the VLCT that the wood on some of the tables were deteriorating.)
- There was a general conversation about the trails. Mike felt that the trail stewards for each section of trail were generally doing a good job. Mike also proposed that we consider a plan to make Whitcomb Hill accessible to people who may not be able to reach it by foot. As he said, some who supported the Whitcomb Hill project would not otherwise ever be able to enjoy it.
- There wasn't anything to report on wetlands.
- Various strategies for raising awareness about environmental cost of invasive species was discussed. There is a sense that the extent of the problem is beyond our capabilities to stop them, but that individual landowners can still mitigate the damage to their own properties. More frequent advertising and educating people about invasive species should be undertaken.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Next meeting: Tuesday, August 29, '17.

Respectively submitted,

Stephen Willbanks, Secretary *pro temp*