Cornwall Conservation Commission

Agenda

Thursday, June 15, 2023, 9:00 am

Location: Zoom, Join Zoom Meeting

**AGENDA:**

• Call to order-9:12 am

Commissioner Deb Bennett and Chair Heidi Cunnick attended. No quorum.

• Approval of agenda-Postponed until next meeting as there was no quorum

• Approval of May minutes -Postponed until next meeting as there was no quorum

**Treasurer Report**

As Treasurer Nancy Berry was not in attendance, no report was officially entered into the minutes. However, it was agreed by Heidi and Deb that excess budget funds could be used for buckthorn blasters and Secchi discs for the water project.

**Old Business:**

**Section #1 A discussion of Items Near Completion as reported upon by the captains of those subjects**

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**Section #2 Education, Outreach and Annual Plan**

• Lake Testing Outreach event, Nancy and Heidi

Deb offered to help set up as needed. More on the Lake Testing later.

• Discuss the Grid Draft from the Planning Meeting

Heidi and Deb discussed the Invasive section of the Grid. It was decided that a coordination between interested parties be developed, and Co-captains Deb and Heidi were put on the grid draft. It was hoped that this important subject be the main focus of the Ag Fair event on Sept. 9th. The subject would include an expansion on invasive species to include insects as well as a more divers list of plants.

**Section #3 Program Monitoring whereby active ongoing projects are reviewed by Committee Leads**

• **HMSP,** Katie reported through a written report about the successful planting of the bioswales at Housatonic State Park .A dozen volunteers planted 1700 native plants in three rain gardens along the bank to control erosion, decontaminate runoff and restore wildlife habitat and structural ecology. A watering schedule is being developed to insure the success of the plants.

• **Air Quality**, Katie

Prior to the meeting, Katie sent an email outlining the failure of the state to adequately monitor the air quality in the NW Corner. A letter below is from Blake Levitt and outlined the efforts, problems and progress.

From: blakelevit@cs.com

Subject: Update on Cricket Valley

Date: June 14, 2023 at 2:33:15 PM EDT

Dear All,

Colette Shulman called me today to get an update of Cricket Valley to take to her Conservation Commission tonight and it occurs that others may want the same. Sorry for being so remiss. Anyone who reads the Lakeville Journal can easily understand how busy Katie is , along with others, replanting Housatonic Meadows State Park in cooperation with DEEP after that egregious hazardous tree cutting of perfectly healthy old growth oaks etc. And I've been tied up with writing peer review papers on other things. The weeks flew by but here we are now with an overdue update:

Katie and I had a phone conversation at the end of April/beginning of May with Peter Babich -- the air division guy -- at DEEP. Good conversation during which we emphasized that this area was not going to keep its private town air monitors functioning -- monitors too buggy, complicated, and expensive, for municipalities -- and that the network was no longer functional. We emphasized that we are moving in the direction of getting funding for DEEP to extend their regular monitoring system to include the microclimates of NW CT instead, as they are the ones with expertise to do this going forward, not us (we were primarily after pre-ignition baseline data which we now have). During that conversation he said DEEP was not in a position to extend their system, that an additional monitor like DEEP's on Mohawk Mt in Cornwall would cost @$1 million dollars, and that they did not have the manpower. We asked for ballpark estimates for how much it would actually take for them to expand, including additional manpower, and thought he understood where we were going. (He's a really smart guy on this and willing to help but has in-house constraints/hierarchy to deal with.) We brought up the possibility of additional mobile monitoring and he said they have a new unit but that it would mostly be used along the coast where air quality is far worse. (DEEP is clearly not that interested in NW CT, or CV -- seem to think we are making a mountain out of a mole hill?)

What he came back with (attached) was detailed information to accomplish the exact thing we told him we could no longer do -- i.e., continue the WCCAA public/private partnership with DEEP via town-owned monitors -- recommended now by him at twice the price to capture more emissions. We will keep the communication lines open with him but it is likely from his email that higher-ups turned our proposal down despite our offer to get them additional funding, and that in order to get DEEP to do this, we will probably need new legislation.

As this was unfolding, Katie and I were also in communication with Maria Horn who chairs the house finance committee but it was getting late in the legislative session to include anything as large as an extra dedicated $1M for DEEP, and the time had long passed the Jan deadline to write new legislation for this. And concurrent with all this, it came to our attention that there was a bill (SB 1146 which became 517), that DEEP was requesting they be removed from helping with oversight of CV which they were required to do thanks to Maria. (Maria looked into this and found that language had already been removed from the bill in the enviro committee -- so good on that! We also contacted Senator Blumenthal's office for help with getting the US EPA to require additional air modeling for NW CT -- have not heard back after initial contacts and need to followup with them. We also contacted AG Tong's office and did not hear back at all, which happened with WCCAA before.

Where this has left us:

. I am monitoring the NY DEC site weekly to see if they have approved CV's renewal -- so far not yet but they have no timeline. (Suspect they are now in no hurry to do so since CV can operate under the old license in the meantime and clearly people are watching. Once they approve, a 30-day comment period begins which is more work for them.)

. DEEP has a fancy new mobile air monitoring unit as seen on FOX local affiliate (link below). We will ask Peter Babich to include NW CT along the river in that on a regular basis and report back to us. (That's an interim approach to getting more fixed DEEP monitors installed.)

. We hope to work with Maria Horn earlier in the new year regarding legislation that would require DEEP to extend their monitors and get them additional funding for it.

Upshot: we did not hit our admittedly ambitious but (we thought) reasonable goals. We did manage to write a comprehensive report and take the pulse of DEEP, maintain friendly contact with their lead air guy, may yet get them to include us in their mobile monitoring efforts, may still get Senator Blumenthal to get EPA to request CT air modeling, and hope to do better in 2024 as this problem is certainly not going away.

If anyone hears anything about CV, please let us know, and we will do the same.

https://www.fox61.com/article/weather/climate-matters/deep-unveils-mobile-air-monitoring/520-cc205a5f-fb6a-4cba-9b51-244ca5624d9b

Very Best and Hope Everyone's Well,

Blake LevittBelow please find the text of the letter:

**• Ridgelines**, All

It was thought that a public presentation of the ridgeline project would move the project forward. At some point, Deb will contact Darrell Cherniske to see if he might speak at this presentation during the winter. Heidi will contact Anna Timmell asking what P&Z sees as critical towards moving the project forward. A meeting with Karen Nelson, Heidi, Anna and Deb Bennett was thought to be an approach to address the issues around ridgeline acceptance.

• **HRRC** Herbicide update, Heidi-not discussed

**New Business**

This written report was submitted by Commissioner Freygang :

**SCT Report:**

- I will be working with a new intern at the NWHCOG, Ryan Ziemnicki starting this week for 2 months.

-I’ve been reviewing town Equity Statements to see what would be good for Cornwall and am in discussion with the BOS.

-Our EDC Roundtable on SCT Support of Economic Development will be June 28.

-Karen Nelson will be updating the LID kiosk information in West Cornwall.

-Deb and I have a rough draft of our chronology of our Invasive Species Educational Programs.

-Still need to engage CCS in an energy plan and review Social Services with Heather Dineen.

Public Comment

Work Tabled or Completed

o NRI - Tabled

 Noteworthy places

o Bylaws – completed

o Website – update has been completed

o Ridgeline – P&Z reviewing

Adjourn-9:57