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| |  | | --- | | **Meeting summary for Conservation Commission (06/20/2024)** | | |
| Zoom  Meeting was called to order 9:02 am  Attending: Chair Heidi Cunnick, Deb Bennett, Lisa Keskinen, K freygang  Also attending was public member Margie Purnell  The minutes of the May Special meeting were approved with changes to be filed |  |
| **Quick recap** | |
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| They deliberated on their ongoing conservation efforts, including managing invasive species, improving the invasives policy, and creating awareness through posters and educational campaigns. Lastly, they explored potential cost savings to the town through waste reduction strategies, the implementation of curbside composting, the mapping of milfoil in Cream Hill lake was also discussed. | |
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| **Next steps** | |
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| • Heidi to send the invasive plant policy draft to Margie, Katie, and Kate for their review and comments. | |
| • Margie to develop best management practices for equipment care to prevent the spread of invasives and include it in the invasive plant policy. | |
| • Margie to check and update the Conservation Commission website, including creating a section on invasives and native plants. | |
| • Heidi to present the invasive plant policy to the Board of Selectmen and other relevant town entities like the Land Use department, Wetlands Commission, Zoning Commission, and Road Crew. | |
| • Heidi to create a new "wanted" poster for August featuring a different invasive plant species. | |
| • Deb and Katie to visit composting sites and develop a program to promote home composting. | |
| • Heidi to meet with Gordon to discuss the composting analysis and potential grants for a curbside composting program. | |
| • Margie to research if there is any pending legislation or mandate from the state requiring residents to compost. | |
| • Heidi to pay $50 each to two boys to catch fish in Cream Hill Lake, take photos, and create a poster of fish species in the lake. | |
| • Heidi to purchase two aquascopes for approximately $200 for Ivan Miller and the lifeguards to conduct Secchi disc readings in the lake. | |
| • Heidi to circulate invoices for reimbursements and expenses approved during the meeting. | |
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| **Summary** | |
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| **Addressing Agenda Issues and Minutes** | |
| Katherine, Conservation, and Deb discussed issues with the distribution and formatting of the meeting agenda. The group acknowledged the problem and agreed to send the agenda in a Word document format to all participants. There was also a discussion about the minutes of the previous meeting. Lisa suggested clarifying the group's role in supporting a legislative act to restrict railroad spraying of herbicides. The group agreed on this change, with Deb taking responsibility for making the modifications to the minutes. | |
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| **Revising Minutes for Composting Challenges** | |
| Lisa brought up that progress on composting and hydrology was slow. Katherine suggested framing ongoing work as "challenges" rather than "failures". The team agreed to revise the minutes to reflect their successes like filling a commissioner seat, while also listing composting, hydrology, and water testing as areas needing more work. | |
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| **Budget Discussion and Fiscal Responsibilities** | |
| The team discussed the remaining budget for the year and the need for careful expenditure. They clarified a confusion regarding an invoice for the Housatonic Meadows Project, agreeing to resubmit the balance to cover labor costs., reimbursed a member for CACIWC membership dues, and considered purchasing Buckthorn Blasters for the Ag Fair. They assigned M the task of researching legislative changes in Connecticut regarding the application of herbicides. | |
| **Invasive Species Management and Education** |  |
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| The team, led by Lisa, planned to review and finalize the invasive species policy, with a focus on tightening it up. They also discussed the ongoing plan presentation to the board of selectmen. The team debated strategies for presenting information to Gordon and the importance of attending meetings to ensure speaking time. Heidi to present and arrange speaking time. | |
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| Deb highlighted the need to be practical when discussing with the town about managing invasive species, suggesting that the town should take the lead due to their existing control measures. She also emphasized the importance of education and sharing best management practices for equipment. Margie agreed to lead this initiative, and it was suggested that she present her findings of the CIPWG Conference in October. The team also discussed the potential of bio control methods being developed by the University of Michigan.  Margie made the suggestion that the P&Z and Land Use Office be apprised of the invasive policy for the town. | |
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| **Invasive Species Awareness and Conservation Campaign** | |
| The team discussed the creation and distribution of posters to raise awareness about invasive species. They agreed on a monthly format, with each team member responsible for designing a unique poster. The team also planned to improve their conservation campaign by changing the design of their promotional materials monthly and posting them on the website and around town. The importance of including information on control methodologies and a link to dispose of pulled-up weeds was emphasized. This will probably occur through the website.  Furthermore, they decided to financially support Anna Timmel’s work through a presentation by Steve Trinkas at the library on July 10th. $250 was agreed upon. | |
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| **Waste Reduction Strategies and Cost Savings**   |  | | --- | | The team also discussed the implementation of curbside composting in Cornwall, with plans to propose the initiative to Gordon and the Board of SelectPersons. Katherine suggested a structured campaign for home composting and requested a detailed cost-benefit analysis. The team agreed on the need for more concrete information before making any claims about mandatory composting requirements | |  | | |
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| The team discussed the potential for cost savings through waste reduction strategies, focusing on garbage tipping fees and curbside recycling. They estimated that composting 5-30% of the annual waste could significantly lower tipping fees and curbside recycling costs. The team also considered the need for additional expenses such as composting bins and a publicity campaign. A pilot project was suggested as a way to test the proposed strategies, with funding to be sought through grants and individual contributions. The team also clarified the effect of waste diversion on costs, confirming that as more waste is removed, the costs decrease. | |
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| **Conservation Updates and Fish Identification Project** | |
| The Conservation discussed various topics including the mapping of milfoil in mid-July, the funding request for milfoil removal, acquisition of two additional aquascopes,  . The Conservation also proposed a project to identify and catalogue the fish in their lake, which would involve paying local children to catch and identify the fish. The conversation ended with the approval of this proposal, with each child to receive $50 for their participation. They would need to create posters and photos.  All told, the reimbursement of expenses for the lake came to $990. | |
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.Katherine announced a program led by Bruce on July 20th, which was co-sponsored by CCC and CCT on managing trees in Cornwall.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:53