**Cornwall Conservation Commission**

**Minutes**

Thursday, November 21, 2024 9:00 am

Zoom Recording Passcode: U1yTiH#T

**Attending:**

Debbie Bennett, Heidi Cunnick, Katie Freygang, Robin Gray, Lisa Keskinen, Tony Scott,

Bart Jones, Margie Purnell

**AGENDA**

**Meeting and Commission Business**

* Call to Order
* Meeting Agenda approved
* Minutes for October 17, 2024 meeting approved

**Section#1 Items near completion or recently completed as reported upon by the oeaers of those areas**

* Approval of the Letter for the Cornwall Conservation Trust:

Bart Jones from the Cornwall Conservation Trust (CCT) presented the background pertaining to the CCT’s request for the CCC”s approval supporting the Trust’s purchase of two parcels of land for inclusion in the Cornwall Conservation Trust. He described the circumstances under which these parcels became available for purchase and the process followed by the CCT in evaluating purchases. Concerns were raised by CCC members regarding consideration of the parcels for affordable housing. Additional concerns were raised regarding the limited amount of time given to the CCC for approval of the letter requested by the CCT. Bart Jones explained why these particular parcels are not suitable for affordable housing and the limitation of the HOUSING XXXX to purchase properties. He also recognized the CCC’s concerns with the limited amount of time allowed for consideration of the CCT’s requested letter and committed to improve communication with the CCC. Katie Freygang motioned to support the letter as presented giving approval for the CCT’s purchase of both parcels. Robin Gray seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

* CCC Finance:

Heidi Cunnick provided a summary of the CCC’s current fiscal year budget. The fiscal year is July 1 - June 30 and in 2024 the CCC was allocated $1960 in funds. Expenditures have included $446 on Cream Lake water testing and $60 for the CACIWC. Remaining funds available for community outreach are $500 and additional water testing may need to be funded. The Chair requested that members consider additional funding needs which will need to be requested at the January meeting (there are no meetings in December or February).

**Section #2 Education and Outreach**

* Sustainable CT (amendment to the agenda):

Katie Freygang reported on the ongoing meetings but that no conclusive actions have been taken. There was discussion of more opportunities for engagement such as the Engineering report to be presented On Monday, November 25th. Also discussed was the data development on building monitoring and that the Town Hall building was one of the buildings targeted.

* Ridgeline Presentation: The Cornwall Climate Resiliency Planning noted the steep slope erosion that had occurred due to a weather event in August 2024 resulting in expensive reconstruction needed as a result of the Essex Hill slump and the Dibble Hill runoff. Noting that protecting slopes is protecting watersheds and that everything done on the ridgeline affects the watershed. Many states and other countries in Connecticut have provisions protecting ridgelines. There was a discussion of how such other provisions work and how Cornwall could move forward with proposed regulations.
* Composting: Heidi Cunnick reported on a meeting with the Town Selectman to present the financial analysis of the proposed composting plan. It was noted that the Selectman’s office is interested in writing a grant for $20,000 to initiate composting at the Transfer Station. The other option under discussion is facilitation of home composting. Specifics for home composting options are to be presented at the CCC January meeting. An interim solution could possibly include a two-pronged approach.

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

* Town Invasives Report: Debbie Bennett and Lisa Keskinen provided updates on the study. The final bill was received from Gambino for $4,900 and was submitted to the town budget. Gambino had problems with the mapping because they were not able to use latitude and longitude. Treatment of Japanese Knotweed was discussed and these will continue next year. Mechanical removal of phragmites at Cream Hill Lake and the possibility of obtaining a grant were discussed. Placement of a poster comparing treatment area to untreated area could possibly help with awareness. A budget increase is needed for signage. Additionally there was discussion of a variety of awareness/educational initiatives, such as Cornwall Chronicle inserts (possibly paid for with a Cornwall Foundation grant), resource list and policy report uploaded to the CCC website, CCT walks where invasives are identified, the Garden Club’s Memorial Day plant sale.
* Agriculture Outreach: Heidi Cunnick and Robin Gray reported on their recent meeting with the Town Selectman to discuss the CCC’s interest in developing more communication with the agricultural sector in Cornwall.
* Website Updates: Margie Purnell noted that the website is updated quarterly and detailed all the recent additions to the website including:

New members of the CCC, updates to the Bylaws, information on invasives, the Stewardship Report, information on composting - particularly home composting and photos from the Ag Fair. The members discussed the possibility of using other social media to highlight CCC activities.

**Special Notes:**

 Tony Scott’s correct email is: TJScott000@gmail.com

 Next Meeting: Thursday, January 16, 2025 at 9:00 am