



Town of Rockingham
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Rockingham Conservation Commission

MONDAY March 11th 2024

MINUTES

Present: Laurel Green, Mike Ghia, Alex Barrett, Jeff Bryan, Peter Bergstrom, Hayden Smith

Absent: Christine Armiger

Guests: Melissa Fisher

Called to order at 7:07 PM.

1. Approve Minutes of February—Moved Laurel, second Jeff, passed
Alteration to the Agenda and Guests Introductions -- Melissa introduced herself, lives in Saxtons River, been interested in the RCC for a while, works for a renewable energy company.
2. Recruitment, Logistics, Networking and Communications
Direct outreach and general publicity; Filling Open Seats
Expiring Terms up for renewal: Peter Bergstrom (re-appointed) and Laurel Green (sent on 2/13).
Jeff and Hayden asked to be appointed to the CRJC, Peter Golec replied they will appoint them soon.
3. Sustainable Rockingham
No report.
4. Conservation Commission coordination with Planning Commission -- Jeff volunteered to do this, reviewing their agendas & minutes for anything relevant to the RCC. Mike explained the roles of different planning and zoning groups in town, in response to questions from Hayden. Jeff will talk to the town's planning and zoning staff.
5. Energy Committee Report
Town Enhanced Energy Plan and Mapping Preferred Solar Locations – Guy Payne is working on the energy plan; no report on mapping.
Town Gravel Pit Solar Project; Corey Hill and Barber Park Proposed Solar Projects—no report, all are in progress
Other Committee Activities-- first “Home Energy” forum, Thursday 3/21, 6:30, Rockingham Library, topic: Weatherization (John Hyslop & John Dunbar). Will be taped by FACT-TV; decided not to try ZOOM.
Starting to work on WindowDressers for 2024, applying for a Grow Grant to pay for low-income free inserts (\$4,000).
6. Herricks Cove, Williams River, Saxtons River and CT River

Outstanding Resource Waters Designations – public ORW meeting held on 3/6, 12 attended in person and 8 on ZOOM, including Laurel & Peter from this group. Most were Williams Scenic abutters, who expressed concerns about trash and trespassing by people swimming in the gorge. We decided to downplay the recreational aspects of the area in the nomination. For the Herricks/Roundys proposed area, the question came up whether the land in Upper Meadows would be included in the ORW; that will be determined later. Hayden shared that he is looking into the zoning for both areas, and will work on a draft support letter to share with partners. The next meeting has not been set.

Hydro-dam FERC Relicensing Process – open for public comment until 4/26, we all got emails from CRC about it. RCC could comment in support of the change to “run of the river” operation which will reduce bank erosion, and thus preserve wildlife habitat such as bank swallow nest cliffs. CRC is holding office hours to answer questions—Peter will share this on Facebook.

Peter moved that we send a letter of support to FERC supporting the proposed change to “run of the river” operation. Laurel moved that we table the motion until our next meeting in case Kathy suggests other items to mention in our letter.

Herrick’s Cove Wildlife Festival Sunday May 5th

8. Walk Bike Committee and other Rockingham Trail Initiatives

Peter reported no recent action on the BF Riverfront Trail extension planning grant, waiting to hear back from StanTec, the selected contractor.

9. Other Activities Natural Resources

Green Up Day May 4th (including Rivers)

Building Bat and Kestrel Boxes for Earth Day; Alex will discuss with Christine. Peter finished cleaning the roughly 30 bluebird boxes we built with VA students in 2022, many of which had been used by house wrens (they were full of sticks).

VT Conservation Strategy <https://www.vhcb.org/our-programs/VCSI> - see emails from Mike about upcoming meetings, he plans to attend on 3/27 virtual.

Invasives – Alex & Peter planning to offer a field trip to 409 Saxtons River Rd (FEMA buyout parcel) in May, probably Sat 5/11, to see interactions between trees we planted there in 2016 with knotweed. Mike shared that the USDA has started releasing a parasitoid to try to control spotted-wing drosophila. Biocontrols are also coming soon to Windham County for EAB (Emerald Ash Borer) and HWA (Hemlock Wolly Adelgid).

10. Announcements of Events of relevance to the RCC Mission- Enjoy the Solar Eclipse Monday April 8th ; Mike is not sure yet how this sugaring season will turn out. He said dense beech clones (saplings) are slowing forest regeneration in the VA sugarbush as the adult beech trees keep dying.

11. Confirm NEXT MEETING **Monday April 15th**

Adjourned at 8:09 PM, moved by Laurel.

Minutes finished & shared by Peter Bergstrom, Clerk, 4-7-24.