

Calais Conservation Commission Minutes (Final)

Date: May 23, 2017

Location: Calais Town Office

Present: Stephanie Kaplan, Julie Hand, Larry Bush, Lou Cherry, Neal Maker, Drew Lamb

Absent: Grant Orenstein, Richard Maizell

Guests: Denise Wheeler – Selectboard Chair, Jamie Moorby & Charlotte Low – Calais Climate Action Team

Stephanie called meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. Agenda revisions and/or additions:

- a. Tree Planting for Town Hall Discussion

2. Approve March Minutes & Matt Peters Presentation Minutes:

- a. Larry made motion to approve minutes as written, to include follow-up meeting on March 6th to finalize discussion of Energy Survey, Neal seconded motion. All in favor.
- b. Neal made motion to approve Matt Peter meeting minutes as written, Julie seconded motion. All in favor.

3. Tree Planting, Calais Climate Action Team:

Jamie & Charlotte attended the meeting today to bring awareness about their Team, discuss their short and long term goals, and what that means to the Calais Community. The Team currently consists of between 8-10 Calais Residents. They have also connected with the Friends of the Winooski who have agreed to advise them as they pursue their objectives of planting.

Last year they planted fruit trees around the Maple Corner Community Center. Their vision is to see more edible vegetation, trees and flowers planted on other town properties and are now focusing on the area around the Town Hall. They realize they need to create or maintain 50 foot buffers around the river. Their goal is to encourage community involvement in these efforts.

Hunger Mountain Co-op recently awarded them with a \$500 grant which they wish to use to purchase, plant and maintain fruit and nut trees on the Town Hall property. Three design options were presented which outlined look, area, and buffer requirements they felt important and reasonable. The Commission overwhelmingly agreed the town would benefit from such generosity and encouraged them to continue working with the Friends of the Winooski. Stephanie suggested that the Department of Forest and Park's Urban Community Forestry Program could also be helpful, as they have similar goals, the current one being an inventory of roadside vegetation that they have contacted us about.

There was some discussion about the fact that a local farmer has been haying the small fields around the Town Hall and concern about eliminating his ability to get hay off the land and also about the potential need for the town to hire someone to mow if the farmer decides there is too little land to make it worth it. Denise said the selectboard will be talking with him.

Larry advised that the Historic Preservation Commission has an ongoing project to refurbish the town hall and it will be important for the tree planting to be done in such a way that it would leave enough space for construction and construction equipment. Using Solar as a means of energy for the town hall and town office has been discussed as an option and potentially aligns with their vision. It was agreed Jamie and Charlotte would be in touch with the Historic Preservation Commission concerning the proposed design.

4. **Conservation Commission Fund Balance:** \$80,125.69

5. **Invasive Plants on roadsides:**

Four different types of invasive plants have been identified in Calais and it's not known where they are all located and how many others exist. Prevent the spreading of such plants is all but impossible but work can be done, such as timing roadside mowing so it is not done after the plants have gone to seed. Education through Front Porch Forum with links, word of mouth, talking with the Selectboard about working with the person hired to do the mowing and possibly a roadside inventory. Stephanie mentioned maybe a Adopt a roadside program could be implemented, or part of a roadside as a way to get the community more involved and aware.

Larry recently attended a meeting in East Montpelier where Mike Bald from Gotweeds? presented his strategy and history on pulling, ridding, and preventing the weeds from spreading. Peter Harvey and Larry will be having a demonstration in the near future. Date, place and time to be determined and announced. Stephanie will contact Mike to see if he can do his presentation to Calais boards and commissions.

Denise advised that an RFP was underway for roadside mowing and it was something they should take into consideration when hiring.

Representatives from Forests and Parks along with Mike Bald is scheduled to meet with the selectboard; date and time to be determined.

6. **Lakes and Streams Committee newsletter:**

Larry updated the group on the last meeting and welcomed feedback on their ideas for a survey. Currently it looks like an electronic surveymonkey style survey would be offered, and also a hardcopy of the survey in the newsletter will go out. Due to funding restraints only one newsletter will go out this year. Their budget balance is \$1036; the survey will cost between \$1400-1600. Lakes and Steams committee is asking the Conservation Commission to see the value of the survey and consider splitting the cost, approximately \$700. Larry asked if there was anything specific the Commission would like in the survey and it was agreed to keep it about the lakes and streams newsletter.

Larry made a motion to have Stephanie ask the selectboard to approve the \$700 to be used for the Lakes and Streams survey from the Conservation Fund. Neal seconded. Discussion: Stephanie amended the motion to ask the selectboard if they have money in their budget to cover some or all of the \$700 rather than taking it out of the Conservation Fund. In the event they do not, then request the selectboard approve \$700 be contributed from the CCC fund. Neal seconded the amended motion. All in favor of amended motion.

7. **Stevens Farm:**

Drew advised that the Stevens Farm owners (siblings) are considering selling the farm which is approximately 100-150 acres either side of Pekin Brook. There may be some opportunity for conservation and Drew was willing to speak with them again about it. Drew will also touch base with Scott Bassage as he has recently had discussion with at least one of the owners. The discussion was strictly informational.

8. Armstrong Farm:

Drew advised that the Armstrong farm fundraising effort was strong and only fell short a couple thousand. The Land Trust agreed to cover the balance.

9. Tree Program:

Stephanie previously emailed the Commission members about the Urban & Community Forestry program and their eagerness to work with us. She explained that Elise Schadler who had met with us last year is now in charge of trees in urban areas, and Joanne Garton was hired to focus solely on rural areas. The Commission was enthusiastic about meeting with Joanne to hear more details about their proposal, and thought it would be beneficial to have the Roads Committee join us. Stephanie will work on scheduling a meeting.

10. Green Burials:

Stephanie provided information related to the law in VT allowing for green burial and the legislation that just passed that reduced the required depth underground to 3-1/2 feet. There are currently no green burial sites in Calais so discussion followed on where might be good locations, how the town would be involved, and whether town forest might be an ideal use of the land. Further discussion to follow in the future.

11. Other Business:

1. Larry initiated a conversation with Trails Committee Chair, Reed Cherrington, to discuss maintaining the trails in the Bliss Pond Forest and whether it made sense or not to have the Trails Committee maintain going forward. Reed agreed it made sense. CCC unanimously agreed with the proposal but asked to have them connect with Steve Killoran as he and a group currently maintain a good share of the trails.
2. Lou will be attending the Clear Water meeting at Lyndonville College on June 6. He will provide a summary during next meeting.
3. Denise said someone did a presentation to the planning commission on river corridors and suggested we have the same person who presented to the comeback and present to the CC. The presentation was specific to streams and river corridors, with the overall message encouraging towns not to develop on such locations. Stephanie suggested that this is more appropriate for the Planning Commission since they are the ones who write the zoning regulations.

12. Public Comment: None

Drew made motion to adjourn, Larry seconded motion. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by,

Candi Smith
Conservation Commission Recording Secretary

