

**CONSERVATION & TRAILS COMMITTEE**  
**Essex Town Offices, 81 Main St., Essex Junction, Vermont 05452**

**Minutes of Tuesday, February 9, 2021**

**In attendance:** Cristine Hammer, Chair; Alan Botula, Vice Chair; Diana Wood, Clerk; Casey Clark  
**Town Staff present:** Darren Schibler, Town Planner; Chuck Vile, Tree Warden  
**Others present:** Mike Spaeder (Trail Caretaker), Madeline McHose (Essex Parks & Recreation)

Hammer Called the meeting to order 6:34 pm

**Agenda Item #1 - Public Comments**

There were no public comments, but the committee did discuss here that Hillary Jones has tendered her resignation. This leaves the committee with 2 openings, but there are 2 interested people.

**Agenda Item #2 - Agenda Changes and Approval**

There were no changes to agenda. Botula makes motion to accept, Clark seconds, all approved.

**Agenda Item #3 - Minutes**

There were no changes. Botula make motion to approve, Wood seconds, all approved.

**Agenda Item #4 - Work Plan & Calendar Review**

Schibler has updated the Work Plan with the Mapping project.

Currently working on the EAB plan and signs. Tree City USA is also active. All others are inactive.

Landscaping ordinance is on hold, but we may want to reactivate that because Planning Commission is revising some of their ordinances, and there may be some overlap. There will be public meeting and hearings.

Clean up days were canceled in 2020. We will review the possibility of doing something in 2021.

Water Quality needs updates with added Storm Smart program and septic socials.

The groups reviewed which members to lead each task:

- Clark has interest in the clean up days.
  - Wood notes that we could have people sign up for time slots, and pre package goodies
  - Hammer adds that we could have multiple locations and projects on different days, perhaps a little later in the season.
- Wood to lead the Trail Keepers program, with assistance from Spaeder

Chuck Vile added that the Indian Brook McGee road project could use timber forest proceeds to pay for it, and allow access to that section of the park. The access point would include construction of a gate. Botula ask about how the road would benefit the park without causing environmental degradation. Vile explains that it would be a one lane and that it was recommended in the Forestry Management plan. Hammer asks about he funding if they would need to come from Conservation. Schibler explains that it

could come from capital or someplace else. The road project is still TBD. Hammer asks about next steps. Vile will provide “ball park numbers”

Forest management plan for Indian Brook is added to the work plan

the group reviewed the public meeting calendar and assigned people to attend Planning Commission. Will make changes as needed.

### **Agenda Item #5 - Trail Mapping Project**

McHose has updates on the trail project. She needs help stickering the trail markers and can use help adding them to the Birchwood and Forestdale sections within the next few weeks, and that will allow us to share a rough map with the public. Need info gathered for these three sections. The group agrees it is best to keep the trails as three separate maps for now.

Spaeder notes that some trails near Foster park have been marked despite being un-official. McHose comments that the Middle School uses them. The easement is in the works.

Sections to be reviewed:

- Mathieu forest red trail (Botula)
- Birchwood Manor yellow trail (Wood)
- Forestdale Natural area blue trails (McHose)

McHose asks about Mathieu town forest and is exploring how old the forest is and when it became designated forest. Hammer notes the Chuck Vile has a wealth of knowledge. Schibler has some resources too. County forester may know details. Schibler add that information would add good information to the management plan for the site.

### **Agenda Item #6 - Development Review**

Schibler gives an update on 137 Towers Rd. No comments from the Committee

1 Kana Lane (off Center Rd, near Essex Beverage) includes the proposed combing lots and adding 8 unit apartment building with expanded parking. Committee agrees it looks good.

Greystone Industrial park. Currently gravel & stone excavation happening there. Ultimately the company wishes to build headquarters. Project originally approved in 2016, but needs some changes approved. Hammer asks about its location to a wildlife corridor or habitat, but Schibler notes that the area is already currently under work.

10 Carmichael St, still needs more work before submittal, was included in the packet, but we will see it again for review.

### **Agenda Item #7 - Emerald Ash Borer Management Update**

Grant update from Schibler - we have 8 planting sites for spring locations are near where the ash trees will be removed. Contractors will be hired to water them. That project is currently out for bid. Botula asks for confirmation that we removed 10 trees total, but some locations already have trees planted.

Next year we are not required to use 2” caliper ball & burlap trees, so that will give us more options. Schibler has updated the spreadsheet of trees, and we should review it. There are the 10 trees from last

year and additional 21 for future years. Botula notes that we should revisit the trees in the spring to re-evaluate them and perhaps identify specimen trees for treatment. The CTC agrees to wait until the trees are leafed out. Botula asks about how many trees we can select for treatment. Schibler replies that it depends on budget and how many of the same tree population is recommended to have 10-15% max. Currently about 200 trees now. It would be \$13,000 per year to treat the trees. Conservation reserve fund can contribute \$15,000 per year. Hammer asks about the possibility of an “Adopt-A-Tree” program to help fund treatment of specific trees. Also reach out to homeowners associations.

Schibler add that school groups wanted to do work on this too, specifically for tree plantings and schools to provide trees and help plant them. Perhaps try for the spring. Option to involve them with Arbor Day Celebration. Hammer notes that might involve a lot of coordination, despite their enthusiasm. Wood notes that it might be better suited to fit with Arbor Day Tree City USA program. One of the hang ups is the town merger, and then we could start consolidating ordinances if merger approved. Hammer adds that at the very least we could provide guidance to schools about what trees to plant as a way to support the effort and lay the foundation for future projects.

CCRPC has a GIS-based tree dashboard, and they could make one for us. We agree that it would be a good way to share our tree data with the public.

#### **Agenda Item #8 - Town Meeting Preparation**

Since there’s no in-person meeting, there will be an information meeting via Microsoft Teams. In previous year CTC would table at the event, but this year there’s nothing we need to do.

#### **Agenda Item #9 - Reading File**

County Forester Ethan Tapper has asked CTC members to amplify his messages about state forestry programs

The VT EAB management updates are included in the reading file.

Hammer adjourned meeting at 8:21pm

Minutes approved February 9, 2021