

**Town of Monkton
Conservation Commission
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, July 9th, 2020 6:00pm
Zoom and Phone Meeting**

Members Present: Chelsea Smiley (Chair), Jaime Schulte (Clerk), Kevin Lambert (Treasurer), Ann Johnston Miller

Members Absent: None

Guests Present: Zapata Courage (Wetlands Ecologist, VT Dept. of Environmental Conservation), Jens Hilke (Conservation Planner, Vt Fish & Wildlife), Laura Farrell, Caroline Alves

Chelsea called the meeting to order at 6:03pm.

Regular Business

- Review Agenda
- Set Time/Date of Next Meetings
 - Thursday, August 13th, 2020 at 6:00pm
 - Thursday, September 10th, 2020 at 6:00pm
- Approve Minutes
 - Approve Minutes for June 4th, 2020
 - **Jaime moved that we approve the minutes for June 4th, 2020. Ann seconded.** No edits were made in discussion. **All were in favor (4-0-0).**
- Treasurer update
 - The Conservation Commission does have a budget of \$500, after further investigation by the Monkton Treasurer. It is budgeted for Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions membership (AVCC), conference fees, and commission activities.

Community Engagement

- Values Mapping discussion with Jens Hilke (Conservation Planner, Vermont Fish & Wildlife)
 - An in-person values-mapping event is no longer feasible in the short-term due to Covid-19.
 - We should have a space linked from the town website to describe values mapping.
 - Meeting types
 - Live event in a virtual room (such as Zoom)
 - For the breakout portion we would assign them to separate Zoom sessions
 - Asynchronous event (online whiteboard open for a period of time) – video that explains how to mark up a copy of a Monkton map. Has some disadvantages (not bouncing ideas off each other). Could save it regularly and either clear the map or let it build.
 - Mail-in option for those who will not participate in an online option for various reasons.
 - Could post a large map somewhere in town for people to physically use.
 - Once we have the values mapping data Jens will consolidate the data into a final map. Need the process to be as inclusive as possible (but also minimize the number of paper maps to consolidate).
 - Gathering the values of community members in terms of the physical areas of town will inform the future work of committees. What places do we collectively value for what reasons/purposes?
 - Outreach will be critical in various forms to encourage participation.
 - We'll aim to have our steps and timeline laid out by the end of our next meeting in August.

Education & Stewardship

- Wetlands presentation by Zapata Courage (Wetlands Ecologist, VT Dept. of Environmental Conservation)

- Reviewed the definition of wetlands and the Wetlands Program Mission, which seeks to minimize wetland loss, protect functions/values, etc.
 - Valuable aspects of wetlands include flood storage, filtering water to improve water quality, habitat, plant species, rare/threatened endangered, recreation, aesthetics, erosion control, oxygen/food/biodiversity, carbon storage.
 - Talked about jurisdictional wetlands:
 - Class I – Exceptional/irreplaceable – all are mapped in VT.
 - Class II – wetlands that merit protection – not all are mapped
 - Class III – can be regulated by federal or town government, but are not regulated by the state.
 - State regulations on buffer sizes for bank stability (50’), water quality (100’), habitat (150’).
 - Vermont Wetlands Program website has many resources.
 - State/federal level has identification/classification, permitting, violation reporting, assisting the business community with compliance, working with non-profit groups and municipalities. At the municipality level zoning requirements, wetland inventory, education/outreach.
 - We spent some time looking at online mapping tools available on state websites.
 - Zapata discussed the success of the wildlife crossing Monkton built in 2015 and how it serves as a model for other communities. She is available to help residents, municipalities, etc.
 - Grants/funding are available to do wetland inventories.
- Morse Park Management Plan
 - The Conservation Commission would like to see a Management Plan in place for Morse Park to protect key species (such as Bobolinks), manage invasive species (such as Wild/Poison Parsnip), preserve recreation opportunities (including the new dog park!). Considerations a plan could address would be things like the timing/areas for mowing and how that effects plant and animal species, species to encourage/discourage, etc. We’ll discuss with Rec and the Selectboard on next steps.

Priorities for the Conservation Commission

- Plan a virtual Values Mapping event
- Continue work on map layers / Act 171 map
- Work toward a Morse Park Management Plan
- Partnership with the Lewis Creek Association to work on the "Impaired Status" of Pond Brook
- Discuss erosion control with Sam Burr (what options/funding exist; what’s worked for him)
- Research zoning language/recommendations
- Have Zapata come to town (for a walk, for a presentation)
- Use Zapata as a resource on our development review process
- Approach Jim Andrews about giving an update/talk on the Salamander Crossing)
- Wetlands Inventory (partner with other communities to obtain funding for an area survey?)

Adjournment

- Jaime moved to adjourn. Ann seconded. All were in favor (4-0-0). Adjourned at 8:21pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jaime Schulte
Clerk