

Charlotte Conservation Commission

Meeting Minutes – September 23, 2014

In attendance: Joanna Cummings, Mel Huff, Fritz Tegatz, Robert Hyams, Roel Boumans, Holly Sullivan

Guests: Laurel Billingsley, Derk Bergquist

DECISIONS

I. Minutes approved

DISCUSSION POINTS

II. Laurel Billingsley

--The CVU students visited the Charlotte Park and Wildlife Refuge and had a great time. They are excited to begin removing invasive species.

--Joanna asked about group sizes. Laurel indicated about 20 students would be working in Charlotte

--Joanna asked whether an ecologist should be hired to help. Roel asked whether that was voted on, and Joanna indicated there was sufficient funding available. Laura said that all supplies and sample processing are paid for by school, and the project is largely designed thanks to Bob and Roel. An ecologist's consultation may not be needed until later.

--Joanna asked how the Commission would be involved—do we need monthly reports? Roel indicated members of Commission are available.

III. Review of By-laws for Conservation Commission

--Roel feels that there is some confusion about what is expected of members. There also seems to be a need to make the Commission more effective and efficient

--Joanna has been handling all the administration of the Commission.

--A number of items have been overlooked by the Commission members.

--Bob indicated that at some times in the past a smaller group of Commission members would be assigned to work outside of normal meeting hours in order to handle strategic planning efforts. This was due mainly to time constraints of the normal meeting hours.

--Roel suggested we start by reviewing the list of officers in the by-laws (3) and make sure we have members in those roles to ensure work is equitably allocated.

--Joanna made the point that it has been difficult to even have a quorum. Fritz suggested that perhaps an email is sent out to determine attendance for coming meetings and cancel if a quorum is not present.

--Mel suggested we determine what needs to be done, then start figuring out who can do what. Bob agreed that some prioritizing of duties is needed.

--Tasks that need to be completed:

What we should do according to by-laws:

1) Attend meetings

--Joanna pointed out that meeting attendance has been spotty by various members and that sometimes makes it difficult to maintain the decision-making process due to a lack of quorum.

--Several members indicated that lack of clarity on the responsibilities of the Commission has made it difficult to maintain morale in the face of a large workload.

- 2) develop and maintain inventory
 - habitat map
- 3) education and outreach
- 4) impact assessments/subdivision reviews/site visits
 - there is a lack of training of members to facilitate involvement in this activity. It was agreed that some training of new or inexperienced members was needed.
 - suggestion to attend planning commission meetings to see how Commission comments are used
 - a checklist for what needs to be done on a site visit was created by Joanna and makes the site visit more straightforward
- 5) Administrative Duties
 - a) Minutes posting
 - what needs to be on minutes? Decisions should be included on minutes that are posted online, but discussion points are a separate point
 - Brittany at Town Hall has information on requirements
 - b) Post notices for Commission meetings
 - c) Budget planning, review, management, and evaluation

--The Commission then reviewed By-Laws section by section

Section 1. Purpose

--general mission/vision items

Section 2. Membership

--discussed number of members, term length, etc. No changes suggested.

Section 3. Officers

--Need to elect officers after Town Meeting

--Historically the Commission has not had members acting in all of the officer roles, although it would be helpful to have them. Vice-chair is particularly important.

--A treasurer would be good to have in order to work on budget with Chair and Vice-Chair

--It was also suggested someone on the commission take the role of facilitating the decision-making process and ensuring the Commission follows the time table laid out in the monthly agenda.

Section 4. Meetings

--no comment

Section 5. Inventories

--A point person is needed to oversee the inventory/habitat maps.

--Roel has clipped many public data layers so they can be overlapped for Charlotte

--Bob pointed out that these maps are supposed to be available and accessible to the public, planning commission, etc.

--The maps need to be prioritized before we send them to Chittenden County

Fritz: In summary it seems our core requirements are to maintain the inventory and to make sure the Planning Commission is aware of the inventory when they make decisions.

IV. Document and communication management

--It was also suggested that the commission needs to choose a platform for distributing and managing documents; binder, google docs, etc.

--Other members agreed that this should be discussed further when time allows

V. Preparation for next meeting

Process for generating future agendas

- 1) Members of the Commission will send agenda items for next meeting to the secretary
- 2) Secretary creates preliminary agenda and sends to Commission for review
- 3) Secretary edits agenda and posts notices at Town Hall, Brick Store, and Spear Street Market