

**Town of Williston Conservation Commission (WCC)
Minutes of September 21 2016**

Approved

Members Present:	Jude Hersey, Carl Runge, Jean Kissner, Gary Hawley, Anthony Jordick
Members Absent:	Eric Howe, Kim Coleman
Staff Present:	Melinda Scott
Others Present:	

1. **Call to Order:** Gary called the meeting to order at 7:05 AM.

2. **Public Comment:** None.

3. **Approval of Minutes from September 7, 2016 and September 14, 2016:** Jean made a motion to approve the minutes of September 7 as revised, Anthony seconded the motion. The motion was carried with a 5-0 vote. Anthony made a motion to approve the minutes of September 14 as written, Jude seconded the motion. The motion was carried with a 5-0 vote. Jean suggested having individual students do specific projects during school year.

4. **CIP Project Proposals/Discussion of trail priorities and planning:** Melinda stated that proposals for the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) are due for submission to the Finance Manager. She specifically wanted to know whether the WCC wants to keep Brownell Mountain Trailhead project in the CIP. WCC is still interested in pursuing this project. Gary suggested approaching Nick Warner (WVPD) to work on scoping out alternatives during the next fiscal year. Gary suggested shifting the allocated funding forward in time, using the \$5,000 for planning and engineering. Or keeping the timeline as is and having Nick work on it through the remainder of this fiscal year. Melinda explained that the location originally conceived won't work because of inadequate sight distances. Carl suggested that one alternative may be to acquire buying land for a parking lot. We need to give Nick a definitive timeline. The trail and parking lot will require engineering. Other projects include Chatham Woods trail and connection to Wildflower Circle, although we don't have any idea how much this will cost. We don't have an easement yet with Heritage Meadows HOA, so we shouldn't spend money on design and engineering until an easement is granted. As it stands, the HOA is requesting that the easement state that a bridged connection will be built to Wildflower Circle. The WCC has reservations about promising this before investigating costs and feasibility. Melinda stated that we could include language to the effect of "the WCC will investigate the feasibility of a bridged connection to..." The WCC discussed asking the HOA to contribute to the costs of building a connection. Melinda will reach out to the HOA regarding the easement language. Gary stated that the first priority should be to maintain the trails we have, and then look at new trails, but Jean stated that we need to do both. Melinda mentioned the Mud Pond

Circumferential Trail, and that the beautiful board walk that VYCC built 2 years ago is not being used because there is virtually no access to it. The trail section along South Road remains to be done, including a bridge/boardwalk structure over a wetland. We already have a design as well as wetland and stream alteration clearances, Gary stated that this would be a valid item for the CIP. Gary suggested combining the design and engineering for the two parking lots into one capital budget item – parking lot planning. Melinda stated that she didn't think design and engineering by itself would be a valid CIP proposal, that as she understands it a proposal must have an end result of built infrastructure. Jude suggested reapplying to a Rec Trails grant for the Mud Pond parking lot. We should ask Nick to work on both parking lots, including easements, engineering, planning, etc. The WCC discussed using VYCC Community Crews instead of summer intern. Although the cost of a crew is high, it would free Melinda's time up to work on trails and other planning. Also, Melinda has seen firsthand how much trail work a crew is capable of doing as opposed to a single intern working alone. For the first year, we might not be able to support a crew for more than 2-3 weeks. What about the independent project work that interns have typically done? Jean stated that we might be able to get individual students to work on projects during the school year.

5. Atwood/Hood (DP 09-07) proposal to deed open space to Town: Melinda brought up Jeff Atwood's proposal to deed 3 acres of wetland to the Town. Gary stated it's already protected so why should the Town take it? There is no benefit from Town ownership. Carl stated that ownership of this parcel could present a liability, for example, during extreme rain events, water from the wetland could back up causing flooding on Lefebvre Lane. Jude made a motion to recommend that the Town does not accept a deed for this property from Atwood. Anthony seconded the motion, and the motion was carried with a 4-0 vote.

6. Staff Report/Other Business:

- VYCC trail work completed
- Melinda suggested having a retreat over the winter to focus on long-term planning. Jude is in favor of this, Carl stated his general dislike of retreats as they often don't result in any concrete gains. It would need to be focused on specific things. Melinda stated it's hard to do long-term planning in these relatively short meetings and it's badly needed for trails.
- Carl brought a ERF funds spreadsheet - \$269,000 balance today, another \$40,000 will be put in shortly. We put in a request for FY18. Up until now, ERF has been used for land acquisition, but is there a way we can legally apply those funds toward land and trail improvement? Is there guidance in VT statute? If no, can we shift funding away from ERF and towards operating funds? Melinda and Carl

will meet to discuss budget, then bringing it to the full Commission. Since the ERF fund is adequate for the time being, Carl proposed requesting \$20,000 for ERF and \$30,000 for operating budget for 2019.

- A public walk on the Oak View Hill trails has been scheduled for Sept 29 and Mud Pond Country Park walk with Ethan Tapper has been scheduled for Oct. 6
- AVCC Conservation Summit – does anyone have interest in attending? Jude has been to several. She stated it is worth going as you always learn something.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:40 am.

Minutes Submitted by Melinda Scott: October 4

Approved by WCC: October 19