Minutes from Craftsbury Conservation Commission meeting on March 17, 2025

In attendance: Colin Netzley (chair), Diane Morgan (vice chair), Elinor Osborn, Liz Keglor, Ken Menard and Molly Sease.

Absent: Farley Brown, Nancy Milholland

Meeting called to order at 7:07pm by Diane, filling in for Colin who was running late.

New agenda items: Diane suggested moving agenda item regarding working group restructuring to the end for more full discussion with members who were running late.

Approval of February minutes - Liz moved to approve the minutes as written from the February meeting, Elinor seconded, unanimous approval.

New Member search: Still searching for one new member to fill the position of Eloise Girard, whose term expired in March 2025. New position term will last 4 years, according to the membership responsibilities explained on the town website, found at link below:

membership responsibilities of the craftsbury conservation commission

Molly volunteered to reach out to Ian Nelson and Brandon Erny who have both expressed interest in joining. Colin will make a post regarding new member position to Front Porch Forum.

Town Meeting report: Diane reported a well-attended Conservation Commission table during floor votes. Table displays included a prospective member sign-up sheet, information regarding invasives including the Emerald Ash borer displays loaned by Jared Nunnery, the Japanese Knotweed site information binder created by Elinor.

The appropriation of $7000 was approved for the Conservation Fund at Town Meeting, adding to the current amount of $38,059.80

One community member suggested that the Conservation Commission do more work on invasives than just knotweed. Conservation members agreed that we do the best we can with all invasives while also acknowledging that knotweed has been identified beyond the state level as a high priority invasive to manage, and so we continue. Molly suggested that concerned community members be encouraged to join as a member or volunteer their time to help us with our invasive species control plan.

Meeting members concluded that the questionnaire posted on the table at Town Meeting was not as effective as hoped because community folk did not offer opinions without gentle encouragement. Diane suggested next year the Commission print slips of paper with survey questions and place them on each chair at the onset of Town Meeting.

Feedback from this year's survey ("What conservation concerns are most pressing to you?") included a concern regarding soil erosion/road runoff into streams and rivers, interest in flood prevention strategies such as tree-planting, and a need for landowner awareness regarding invasives.

It was noted that VT natives planted years ago along Cass Brook near the Jones farm are now 20 ft tall and shading the brook-just as intended.

Watershed Grant update and Invasives management plan: Elinor shared the update and plan for the upcoming season at the JK site.Elinor will order ~200 VT native plants in early April, ready for pick up April-mid-May. Once picked up, plants will need to be kept cool and hydrated and planted ASAP according to planting grid. Additionally, need to assemble dry rack at JK site ASAP as knotweed begins to sprout again in early April-generally it's a good idea to let it grow 1ft tall before cutting.

Before planting, will need to measure and make planting grid, mark erosion fabric and flag each hole for specific plant, and cut slits in advance of planting to size of each particular plant root to minimize knotweed sprouts. Discussed how to make planting easy for volunteers- do we flag each plant with a corresponding flag at each hole? Do we use skewers? Would chalk be easier as skewers may not puncture fabric? Will rain wash chalk away? Would spray paint be easier? Elinor will test how to slice fabric with knife, scissors, and exacto-blade.

CCC will put word out to notify volunteers a few weeks in advance of planting and then closer to planting on FB, Instagram, FPF and volunteer list. Exact day will be determined as weather allows-ideally just before it rains! It was noted that May 2 is the "all-college work day" in which fascines will be made on site by Sterling College students, coordinated by Farley. Knotweed will need to be dug along bank first, and fascine construction immediately afterwards to control erosion and prevent sediment flow into stream. Based on experience in past, weekdays at 5pm seem to be best for volunteers, and/or weekends. Needs for planting day: watering cans/5 gal buckets, shovels, plant dibbles.

Ongoing JK site maintenance:

- weedeating knotweed on bankside of Cole Rd: previously done by Ethan Dreissgacker. Needs weed eating every 2 weeks, takes avg 1hour. Can a CCC member(s) do this?

-will need to plant grass seed along TH19 between erosion fabric and road, and this will need to be managed by mowing or weedeating. Do we plant native Poverty grass, which is expensive? Red clover, which is not-native? Is straw sufficient to hold grass seed down in high winds? Would a woven mat be more

-managing volunteers: Molly will reach out to Hannah Dreissgacker requesting volunteer help from visiting u-23 and resident Green Racing Project athletes over the course of the season.

Other: Elinor wonders if a CCC member can coordinate an iNaturalist bio blitz to inventory the insect population on knotweed vs native plants at the JK site over the course of time. Elinor also altered the CCC to a Statewide Introduced Invasive Species Gathering in Montpelier on May 9, 2025. Sam Pierce of the VT Land Trust extended the invite, and noted that Craftsbury "has been doing some really great invasive species management, specifically with knotweed" and hopes members of the committee will be able to attend. Registration required.

Diane and Elinor attended a Zoom webinar on invasives in Waitsfield and Warren, VT. Conclusion is that here in Craftsbury, we are doing a great job managing our invasives.

Greensboro CC report: Colin attended the Greensboro CC meeting. He learned they meet every other month, for about 2 hours, and offer a zoom-in. Projects are initiated by individual

members (as opposed to working groups), and the meeting largely consisted of updates per project. Some projects include: raising awareness on rodenticide use in Greensboro, a trail-cam program mapping wildlife corridors, culverts, and professionally made signage. He noted they have a treasurer and have a working fund of $3k. Greensboro wants to collaborate on projects and shared volunteers. Colin will visit more committees.

Working group restructuring: Will discuss abolishing working groups and restructuring at the next meeting when have more info from how other committees operate. On Tuesday, March 18, Diane reported that we *do not* need to warn a working group meeting per Open Meeting laws if working group does not make a quorum.

Working group reports: none

Items for next meeting: April 21, 2025: working group restructuring. Plant pick-up: Molly, Diane and Elinor will coordinate native plant pick up at the Intervale in Burlington. Revisit including zoom for all future meetings per new law.

Coling adjourned the meeting at 8:07pm.