

The Greensboro Conservation Commission

Minutes

General Commission Meeting
10:00 a.m. Saturday, November 16th, 2024

Present

Emily Cayer, *Advisor*
Jane Hoffman, *Treasurer*
Erika Karp, *Member*
Liza Keisler, *Member*
Will Marlier, *Clerk*
Linda Shatney, *Member*
Chris Steel, *Chair*
Peter Watkinson, *Member*

Absent

Clive Gray, *Member*
David Kelley, *Member*

Members of the Public

Rachel Kane, *Hardwick*

1.) 10:08 - **Meeting Commences**

2.) Will Marlier: **Review & Approve Minutes** of the Meeting on Sept. 21st, 2024

a.) Progress on Actions

Will Marlier briefly ran through the action items not covered by agenda items later in the meeting. He confirmed that he had written and submitted the GCC's annual report to the town offices, and Chris Steel confirmed that he had clarified term lengths for board members.

3.) Jane Hoffman: **Treasurer's Report & Future Expenses**

a.) AVCC Dues

Jane Hoffman provided a brief overview of the commission's finances. One outstanding expense is the \$50 charge to the AVCC in payment of the GCC's dues. She had asked Brett to pay that expense recently. Chris Steel remarked that he was happy to see the commission had made \$154.50 in fundraising at the HCA Bird Event in August.

Net assets currently stand at **\$2,523.09**.

4.) Rachel Kane: **Hardwick Conservation Commission**

Rachel Kane, of the Hardwick Conservation Commission, provided an in-depth report of their organization's ongoing and recent projects. She first commented that she was surprised at the GCC's productivity, considering it only meets once every 2 months, while the HCC meets monthly. Rachel Kane spoke about the natural resource inventory that Hardwick has just completed. They are currently working on interpreting the data and deciding on how to use it. Erika Karp will follow up with Rachel to see how much that NRI cost to produce, who performed it, and if HCC might recommend them for work in Greensboro.

Rachel Kane also spoke of an educational program the HCC recently hosted that focused on the new Act 59 legislation that aims to preserve 30% of Vermont land by 2030 and 50% of Vermont land by 2050. Trey Martin of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board led this talk.

Rachel reported that the HCC had received a \$30,000.00 grant to plant trees in 35-50 unique sites across downtown Hardwick. Peter Watkinson asked if they had considered planting fruit trees, as his experience suggests communities tend to provide more care for trees they consider to provide something in return. Rachel indicated that they would not be planting fruit trees. Will Marlier asked what the source of the grant was, and Rachel Kane replied that she would follow up with more information. Chris Steel wondered if this, and other large grants provided to local conservation commissions, might indicate if the GCC should be more ambitious and pursue larger projects. Peter Watkinson expressed that he felt the GCC was already very ambitious.

Rachel Kane also shared that the HCC had participated in Hardwick's Spring Fling by pulling a float and giving away plants and trees (sourced from a nursery in New Hampshire). She extended an invitation to the GCC if it had any interest in participating in 2025's Spring Fling.

The conversation then moved to invasive species. Rachel Kane indicated that the HCC would like to spearhead a mapping program where volunteers could report the location of invasive species to be mapped and monitored by HCC members. Will Marlier spoke about the work he did in the summer of 2023, and expressed that the amount of work required to create a comprehensive catalog of a town's invasive species was considerable.

Liza Keisler will be in touch with Rachel Kane to further discuss the possibility of future collaboration between the HCC and GCC.

5.) Will Marlier: **Invasives Program Report**

Will Marlier first reported on his action items from the last meeting. He had been in touch with Chris Steel regarding potential invasives management contractors, and the two had decided Will Marlier would reach out to Luke Hardt of Hardt Forestry in Hardwick. Will also shared that he had been in touch with Mary Walz of Knot in Hyde Park and confirmed drying stations are capable of composting in place.

Will Marlier also reported that he had identified 3 potential funding sources for this work. The VT Agency of Natural Resources' "*Watershed Grant*", the Vermont Council on Rural Development's "*Climate Catalyst Innovation Fund*", and the Association of Vermont Conservation Commission's "*Tiny Grant*".

Will Marlier updated the commission that he was in the early stages of contacting the Greensboro road crew regarding collaboration on invasive species management.

Regarding signage, Will Marlier reported that one contact quoted him \$12.50 for a one-sided 18"x24" sign and \$7.50 for a one-sided 6" rounded sign. Will informed the commission that he and Chris Steel had decided to move forward with a more substantial 24"x24" sign at the Highland Lodge demonstration site. Will passed around a few mock-ups of signage designs for that location, and members generally indicated a preference for the 3rd design. Will Marlier will further refine the design in pursuit of a final product to have in place by spring 2025.

Liza Keisler expressed concern with the terminology "invasive" species, as she feared it would serve as inflammatory language in our current political climate. Liza indicated that she is aware of a wider conversation considering new language to replace the term. Liza Keisler suggested "ecologically damaging" species be used instead. Will Marlier responded that he didn't feel "ecologically damaging" was a sufficiently descriptive replacement, as it only addressed one aspect of what makes a species "invasive". Chris Steel requested that Will Marlier strike the word "invasive" from any future signage for the ongoing project.

Liza Keisler suggested that coordinating community events around invasive species management may be a successful way of crowd-sourcing labor. She

suggested these events could include food or drinks in an attempt to make them more attractive.

Erika Karp asked other commission members about their experience with glyphosates as a method of management. Emily Cayer shared that she had used it with some success, and Liza Keisler shared that she had heard mixed information on how quickly it breaks down in the soil and potential long-term harm.

6.) Liza Keisler: **Pollinator Pathway**

Liza Keisler and Chris Steel discussed the presence of either Witch Grass or Winter Rye at the rail trail plot. Liza indicated that winter rye would be preferable. Liza suggested that high-mowing may be required at the pollinator garden at about 6 week intervals.

Will Marlier passed around potential signage for this pollinator pathway. Chris Steel requested that its design considers the work of the Greensboro Pollinator Working Group and their pollinator garden, which would be located nearby.

Chris Steel requested that future agenda items regarding this project denote that Liza Keisler is leading the project.

7.) Emily Cayer: **Wildlife Crossings**

Emily Cayer shared that 7 cameras were currently employed in the program, and that an 8th camera was soon to be installed. Emily and Chris Steel indicated that the program shouldn't aim to employ more than 10-15 cameras. Emily reported that she has been compiling data from the sightings in a single spreadsheet and was still thinking about the best ways to make this data useful. Emily also shared that she had been utilizing the state's BioFinder software to explore wildlife connectivity. Emily Cayer will bring some of the maps and overlays she has been reviewing to the next commission meeting.

Emily Cayer presented a few minutes of wildlife sighting highlights. Some of these animals included moose, deer, turkey, grouse, coyote, fox, weasel, and bobcat. Peter Watkinson remarked that many of the animals depicted were unusually large, and Emily confirmed this was in fact the case. The commission discussed the potential benefits and drawbacks of different camera models.

8.) Jane Hoffman: **Ethan Tapper @ The HCA**

Jane Hoffman reported back that she, Linda Shatney, and Liza Keisler had attended Ethan Tapper's talk. Jane shared that it was attended by 25-30 individuals, and that the Galaxy Bookshop was there selling and facilitating the signing of Ethan's book.

9.) Emily Cayer, Jane Hoffman & David Kelley: **Wild Cats 2025 Program**

Jane Hoffman shared that they had settled on Sunday, August 24th with the Highland Center for the Arts hosting. They are still exploring potential presenters.

10.) **Schedule Next Meeting & Other Business**

Will Marlier will schedule the 2025 GCC meetings and send out invites. The next meeting will be in January 2025. The meetings will continue to be held at 10:00 AM on Saturdays at the Greensboro Free Library.

Chris Steel shared that the adopt-a-culvert program was off to a good start, with 15-20 volunteers already signed up.

Chris Steel also shared that he had given a bird presentation at the Craftsbury Community Care Center that had been well received. It was provided in an accessible quiz format.

Chris Steel requested that Jane Hoffman facilitate adding a link to the Greensboro Association's water quality page to the town website.

Jane Hoffman requested that Liza Keisler send her address for updating the commission's contact list.

Liza Keisler asked the commission about potentially putting on a presentation by a scientist and photographer that specializes in northern peatlands. The commission generally agreed that it sounded like a worthwhile and interesting presentation to pursue.

Will Marlier passed around potential designs for a GCC logo, and those present shared their preferences. They all agreed on utilizing both a vertical and horizontal design that employed clear easy-to-read fonts. Will Marlier will make those changes and circulate another draft of the logo.

11.) 11:55 - **Adjourn**