

Charlotte Conservation Commission
Draft Meeting Minutes
February 27th, 2024
Town Hall and on Zoom
7:00 pm

**Maggie Citarella, Maggie Korey, Claudia Mucklow, Sharon Mount,
Dave McNally, Pete Demick, and Susan Blood.**

Guests:

**Charles Russell, Paul Plante, Ethan Tapper (Chittenden County Forester), Jim
Donovan, Katherine Lampton (Charlotte Land Trust), and Frank Tenney.**

Action Items:

- Connect with Ethan Tapper about a possible event!
- Write a letter to the SB in support of the Charlotte Land Trust and their work on behalf of the property on Lake Road.
- Susan - ask Nate about making other people coleaders on zoom calls!
- Ask Rebecca about the current state of our one pager!

-
- 1. Meeting Call to Order**
 - 2. Agenda Additions / Deletions**

Add officer elections to Item 6.

There is a sentence in the Charlotte News about whether conservation easements can be taken away from property in town. This has not been brought up at any PC meeting. This was a group of citizens.

- 3. Public Comment - none**

- 4. Outreach Opportunities with Chittenden County Forester Ethan Tapper**

Want to talk about ways we can collaborate and possibly host events together.

Ethan is part of the state's [Private Land Program](#). Vermont is 75% forested and 80% of that is privately owned. Most landowners are lay people and foresters can help them make a plan for their forested land. There is no cost to contacting the County Forester and asking a question. Ethan's job consists of the following:

1. Administering the Current Use program. If you have more than 25 acres of forested land it's possible to get a tax break for that land.
2. Provide service - will visit homeowners land.
3. Manage town forests. There are about 5000 acres of town forests in the county. It's helpful to use those forests as a tool to show folks what healthy forests look like.
4. Community Outreach. One quarter of the people in the state live in Chittenden County! He does lots of events. (last year he did 50!). Ethan has a [youtube channel](#) and email list! Forests are managed for protecting biodiversity, producing local resources, protecting us against climate change - and so Ethan talks to Vermonters about how to do that.

What is the CCC interested in doing with education and outreach? We are getting back to doing events after the pandemic and we would love to jumpstart things by trying to do something for Earth Month!

He's found that calling a nature walk a wildlife walk encouraged more people to come. People are also interested in carbon and climate change walks. Bird walks are also popular! Forest management for birds or wildlife is similar - so you can weave forest management into those talks. Tree ID walks are also popular. And he can talk about ecology etc.

Also partnering with another organization helps to get more people to come. He does walks with City Market Coop! Mix up who you partner with! SO be creative about those partnerships! And also be aware of how you title things - like talking about invasives on a tracking walk. Also, have different kinds of events. - online, walks, library.

Ethan hasn't worked with the CCC before. He works with the invasives committee and also the senior center.

Have you helped towns form town forests? He thinks of the Wildlife Refuge off of Greenbush Rd. as our town forest. It used to be a specific designation but now it's any forests that the town owns. That said, if the community wanted to add forest, Ethan would be happy to help.

Would it be possible to do an event this year? Maybe something about non-native invasive plants, deforestation and forest fragmentation, smart planning and zoning?

Jens Hilke originally helped the town with the wildlife mapping. North of Whalley Rd and West of Lake Rd - there is a town forest there! There is an easement from Whalley Road and it's called [Whalley Woods](#).

If we find areas of high public value, how do we keep the humans out? For instance, the trails committee is wanting to place trails through areas that we think should not be crossed. How to keep dogs out? We need to stop additional forest fragmentation. Look at the [Vermont Forest Fragmentation Report](#). So develop trails closer to the already disturbed parts of our landscape and leave the deeper parts alone. It's very important to keep the forest from being fragmented further. The biggest threat is deforestation. We need to increase housing in town centers and increase restrictions on forest blocks.

Happy to do an event with us this spring. Talk or walk and we can talk about what the topic might be! Evening presentation at library or a walk on a Saturday.

Thank you, Ethan!

5. Conservation Fund Application with Kate Lampton of the Charlotte Land Trust

Maggie shared application materials. This is for the property on Lake Road.

CLT and VLT are making an application for \$30,000 from the Conservation Fund. Kate is making a presentation to 3 groups. They hope to go to the Selectboard in March and hope to get approval before going to the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB).

The [Lake Champlain Land Trust](#) - holds easements on lots 2 and 3.

Jim and Patricia Donovan are the current owners of this property on Lake Road. 51% ranked as prime agricultural land, 47% as statewide, and 25 acres are tillable. It's a very scenic part of Charlotte. The entire lot will be conserved and there will be a house building envelope. 117 acres will be conserved. Thanks to Jim and Patricia - they donated the easements completely for Lots 2 and 3. Holmes Creek goes through this property. This will join the Wildlife Refuge and other conserved lands - about 5-600 acres total.

She's asking us to get comments to the SB before the meeting about this!

The fund is a reserve fund and has about \$200,000 in it.

This will be a farm parcel. The land will only be accessible to the people that live there. And of course, farm animals! The house will be used by a farmer and the Vermont Land Trust will match a farmer to the land.

[OPAV](#) option to purchase agricultural value.

Monitoring will happen every 1-2 years.

6. Administration (Minutes, DRB Review Assignments, Budget)

January Meeting Minutes - motion made and seconded to approve. Approved!

3 - Draft Meeting Minutes

DRB review assignments. Pete and Claudia will be the next reviewers! Motion made, seconded and approved!

Officer elections! Pete, Roel and Dave's terms expire April 30th. Please send an email to Nate to get onto the Selectboard agenda.

Soon we should vote again for our positions - if anyone is interested in a position, that would be great! Our formal positions are:

Chair

Vice Chair

Secretary

Treasurer

Budget - We have \$2,522.12 from the calendar sales! We can use it for anything!!! But because we haven't used it, they didn't give us the \$600 we asked for! Motion made to contribute to Earth day speaker fund not to exceed \$500. Motion seconded and approved!

7. Town Planning and Development Review (PC and DRB Updates, Habitat Map)

DRB Updates - Claudia and Maggie talked to Aaron and Rebecca about when we get info because we were notified on a Saturday and there wasn't enough time to get a response together over the weekend.

The best time for us to give feedback is just after the sketch plan.

Brochure - The one pager is still in progress which is pretty frustrating. Rebecca asked if the DRB had approved it. It has not but they don't really have authority over our process. So we'll ask Rebecca about the current draft.

What do we do if there is a conflict about comments for a letter? Do we need a special meeting or does Maggie or Maggie decide? Would be good to encourage positive things they are doing.

Visual Preference Survey - Open until March 24th - look at Maggie's email!

Need to talk about our Vision Letter. The Charlotte News didn't want to publish something from a group. They changed the title... Sharon will be back in touch.

Claudia - nothing has changed on the PC side. They are still working on non-conforming structures.

LCA Stormwater event - March 28th!

Ethan - ask him to talk about forest fragmentation, pressures of zoning.

4 - Draft Meeting Minutes

8. Outreach (Events, Trails / Cameras)

The form for borrowing cameras is done!

Nate is going to try to come to our next meeting! :)

9. Adjourn (Next Meeting is 3/26)

Motion made to adjourn. Seconded and passed.

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Susan Blood.