

JOHNSON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 14, 2022

Present: Lois Frey, Sue Lovering, Noel Dodge, Carrie Watson, Dean Locke, Denise Ashman, Jared Jasinski

Absent: Jackie Stanton, Peter Hammond

Guest: Dan Singleton

The March minutes were approved.

VISIT FROM DAN SINGLETON

Forest, Parks and Recreation's Dan Singleton came to discuss work the state is doing on the VAST trail south of Belding Pond. It includes a bridge that is located on the corner of the Reservoir property. The existing trail on state land contiguous to Reservoir is down to bedrock and has water damage. Presently it is flooded.

They'd like to re-route the trail through drier ground off the Reservoir property, replace the bridges on state land, add water bars, find an access route over private land, and gate both ends of the trail. Off season, the gates would be locked and we would have a key/combination. They'd like permission to cross our land if needed. Dan assures us that they will smooth and seed any damage, leaving it like they found it. The work may be done in the fall or next summer.

A motion to allow them access to the Reservoir property was passed. Dan will send a document and we'll take it to the selectboard to sign.

MISSION STATEMENT, POLICY

What's the next step? There was pushback at the selectboard meeting about creating policy. We discussed substituting 'procedure', but decided policy is what's needed for these reasons:

- With a policy, we can hold them to a standard.
- We'll bring an opinion to the entire selectboard, negating the possibility of one member with a personal agenda circumventing the issue.
- We can attend selectboard meetings and ask to be included in the conversation.
- A written opinion carries more weight than a verbal one.
- Nobody can claim to have talked to us and gotten approval when they hadn't. That has happened in the past.

The selectboard asked how it would work:

- Project originators would send project proposals to the Conservation Commission in writing.
- A written response is necessary.
- To streamline to procedure, the CC would review it in a group email, and respond in writing.

The following statement (in red) was passed and will be added to the original statement: The Conservation Commission's mission is stewardship of public lands; advocating for the protection of all of Johnson's natural resources for present and future generations. We endeavor to strengthen relationships between the people of Johnson and our natural environment, to instill a shared responsibility and awareness within the community for the protection and preservation of the environment, and to achieve a balance with present and

future responsible growth. The Commission's charge is to advise the Select Board, Planning Commission, Trustees, special interest groups, and individuals on matters concerning Johnson's lands and natural resources.

We request that the Selectboard make it their policy that formal comment from the Conservation Commission be a required component of any development idea or proposal on town property. **We request that all project proposals include written comment from the Johnson Conservation Commission before action by the selectboard.**

Lois suggested that we should develop a media campaign to let people know what we're doing.

TRAIL BUILDING

The group hasn't met yet. Lisa Crews says we'll be on the agenda for the next meeting.

GOMO KIOSK

Still nothing.

BAT HOUSES

The bat houses that have collapsed at the Arb need to be reset. Noel has a plan for better engineering using one pole for two houses that would enable lowering them for cleaning. We'll plan on two sets using pressure treated lumber. A motion was passed to buy supplies for that purpose.

We'll plan to clean them and do a survey of all the houses to see how much activity is there.

MISC

- Dan Singleton reports a great deal of ATV and truck damage on the state land above Sterling and admits that much more enforcement is needed.
- Noel reports that it is common for Vermont towns to get CC overview on development proposals.
- ATV season opens on May 15. Considering the ATVs on the roads, you'd never know it.
- We need to buy all supplies by June 15.
- Quote of the night: "Pressure treated wood growing in the back yard would be disturbing." Now that there is a real piece of wisdom.

Adjourned at 8:31

Next meeting on May 12 at the municipal building at 6:30

Submitted by Sue Lovering, Secretary