

Northfield Conservation Commission
Minutes of the Meeting of June 20, 2018

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm.

- I. **Roll Call:** Present were Commissioners: Pam Knox, Laura Hill-Eubanks, Ruth Ruttenberg, Debbie Zuaro, Russ Barrett, Jane Pekol
Guests: Lydia Petty, Elizabeth Atems
- II. **Set/Adjust Agenda:** Added VYCC
- III. **Public Participation (Scheduled): None**
- IV. **Approval of Minutes May 2018**
 - a. Approved 5-0-1
- V. **Discussion:**

TDS Fundraising Activities and Issues: Race is moving forward. Insurances and permissions are all set. Five dollars from each entry fee will come to the NCC for the land purchase and maintenance and improvement of the property. NCC members can participate and/or run a booth and sell t-shirts. We will have an informational booth; could potentially have Kati Osgood's book to sell. 100 runners would be a good number. Jason Endres is working on a map. Jane will reach out to him so we can review a draft. The fundraising total is over \$8,000 right now. For shirt sales, Debbie would like to do another one or two farmer's markets. The fundraising team is trying to see whether we can offer the shirts for sale at a few local businesses downtown. We may need to do specific dates and times to be there to sell the shirts. Debbie will see whether we can sell them out of the Town Offices as well. Chandra Blackmer of Field Stone Farm has offered to have an on-farm dinner with wood-fired pizza as a fundraiser. Beer and wine may be able to be offered. NCC will plan a hike through Cheney Field, and up Paine Mountain to the summit, on Sunday, July 1 at 10:00 AM. Russ will coordinate the planning. Loren Howard may be willing to lead a fern walk. Elizabeth Atems expressed her support for the TDS purchase and will plan to join the hike.

TDS Purchase: Select Board reviewed the contract and it was a unanimous decision to approve. The contract can now be sent back with signatures and a deposit that will go toward the purchase price.

Potential Solar Farm at Cheney Field: Norwich has an easement for the existing bike trail in Cheney Field. Solar farm should not go over the trail. It looks as though it might also cover some of the existing Paine Mountain Trail through Cheney; need to check that. The Electrical Utility Commission and Select Board are holding the first public meeting on Monday. Is there the potential to have a public vote or to add this issue as a ballot item in November? Recreation on Paine Mountain brings money into Town. Bradford Conservation Commission uses their local mountain as a hiking destination and has a good website for promoting it. The 2014 Town Plan states that the Town Forest and Paine Mountain are to be used and/or protected for recreation, wildlife habitat, water supply, and forestry. Cheney is part of the Town Forest by state designation. This solar farm could set a precedent that Town Forest

land can be used for commercial development, which they are not intended for. There is concern that not enough alternative sites for the solar project were looked at. We strongly urge the process to be a special election or a vote held at next year's Town Meeting. Jane will send out a draft statement for review. Cheney Field is one of the largest areas of open space on Paine Mountain. The developer fees and profit are not included in the proposal and would be good information to have. Elizabeth Atems participated in the discussion to voice her concerns over the solar project in Cheney.

Facebook responses: It is difficult to respond to the public's questions (when folks are seeking opinions) on Facebook without consulting with the whole Commission. A notice on the page stating that we are happy to respond to policy or logistical questions but that we do work as a Commission and responses need to come through the Commission's response process/after next Commission meeting. Laura can post this notice. Ruth can keep an eye on the page and bring a list of the issues that come up to the Commission's regular meetings. Pam will add "Facebook responses needed" as a regular item on the agenda for future meetings.

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB): Ruth proposes working with the Select Board to promote EAB awareness. State has a 15-page document with a suggested plan for how municipalities can plan and act to maximize protection from EAB. The goal we should basically have is to let people know not to move firewood. This is the fastest way that the pest spreads to new areas. UVM windshield survey suggests that there be some thought given to valuable Ash trees. Right now 5 near-by towns have found EAB and the majority of Northfield is in the "danger area." If Northfield folks move firewood they are endangering other areas. The state will set up seminars and there are webinars available. A Committee for tree planting (a diversity of species) and for outreach could be instrumental. Moving firewood in the winter does not tend to spread the pest. All that season's wood should be burned to be safe. Ruth will send the link to the information directed toward municipalities, homeowners, and others. Ruth and Russ will begin outreach on FPF, Facebook, and flyers around town. Russ has been invited and will speak to the Selectboard at their meeting next week.

Conservation Camp: Five kids from Northfield are going to go to Misse Axelrod's Farm and Forest School, with scholarship money NCC received through the Rotary. Some are half-day and some are full. Misse had previously been covering costs for kids who can't afford it, so this is a very good match for our funds, and allows Misse to expand her reach.

VYCC – Patrick sent us a report. Should be sent officially to the Town.

VI. **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 7:27.

Respectfully submitted by Jane Pekol. These minutes are subject to review and revision at the next scheduled meeting but are substantially correct.