

**TOWN OF SPRINGFIELD
SELECTBOARD HALL – 96 MAIN STREET – THIRD FLOOR
REGULAR CONSERVATION COMMITTEE MEETING
SATURDAY, November 4, 2023**

APPROVED MINUTES

A. CALL MEETING TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND ROLL CALL

MOTION: Nathaniel Ells moved to appoint Carrie Kellow the acting Chair for the meeting of November 4, 2023.

Seconded by: Chuck Gregory

Vote: 6-0, unanimous

Acting Chair Carrie Kellow, called the meeting to order at 11:13 am. Roll Call was taken.

Conservation Committee Members: Carrie Kellow, Geetu Melwani, Hallie Whitcomb, Chuck Gregory, Heidi Trimbach, and Nathaniel Ells were present in-person.

B. ANY REQUESTED ADDITIONS TO THIS AGENDA

Geetu Melwani proposed to change the meeting times from 11 am to 11:30 am to accommodate members. Further discussion ensued that the meeting schedule would be set as item number 5.

C. NEW BUSINESS

ITEM #1 Adopt Rules of Procedure

Acting Chair Carrie Kellow presented the proposed Rules of Procedure based on the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) model Rules and Procedure. Acting Chair Carrie Kellow noted that she made the font bigger for accessibility.

Acting Chair Carrie Kellow discussed that the committee needed to decide what they will do for a regular scheduled meetings and in the public participation item 2 they needed to decide when public comment would be opened and the amount of time they would allow. Acting Chair Carrie Kellow recommended that they use “at the conclusion of the discussion of each agenda item”.

Hallie Whitcomb commented that she preferred to see a more interactive flow to meetings with committee members and the public. Further discussion ensued to clarify that this item in Public Participation discussed agenda items specifically. Nathaniel Ells proposed that the Committee have an open comment at the beginning of the meetings. Acting Chair Carrie Kellow noted that the agendas have a “requested additions” before getting into the agenda items, where people could request topics be added at the time of the meeting and noted that this agenda had a public comment section at the end to accommodate public input, as well.

Further discussion ensued regarding the flow of meetings having public input in various areas of the agenda. Geetu Melwani commented that she hoped that the meetings would not be as procedural as the Selectboard meetings to allow for more organic conversations. Acting Chair Carrie Kellow noted that adopting these procedures gives us a basis that if something comes up and we need to be more procedural we would have something in place to fall back on.

Further discussion ensued to propose the following revisions to the Public Comment section:

2. At the ~~{beginning of/end of/conclusion of discussion of}~~ each agenda item, but before any action is taken by the public body at each meeting, there ~~may~~ will be ~~{number}~~ minutes time afforded for open public comment. ~~By {unanimous/two-thirds/majority} vote, the body may increase the time for open public comment and its place on the agenda.~~

Further discussion ensued that the meeting schedule would be included with the regular scheduled meetings being the first and third Saturdays of the month at 11:30 am with the next meeting being on November 18, 2023.

MOTION: Geetu Melwani moved to adopt the proposed Rules and Procedures with revisions aforementioned.

Seconded by: Nathaniel Ells

Further discussion ensued that adopting the Rules and Procedures would protect the committee should something contentious arise.

Vote: 6-0, unanimous

Further discussion ensued regarding the Selectboard approved membership of the Conservation Committee being 7 members, so there is currently a vacant seat on the Conservation Committee. Additional discussion ensued that having an open seat allowed for someone to join as the Committee established a presence and it allowed for the possibility of them being able to get a Student Committee member as the Committee starts to work with the schools.

Heidi Trimbach inquired if the Committee was able to request that the Selectboard increase the number of members if a need arises. Acting Chair Carrie Kellow responded that she believed it was allowed to be requested of the Selectboard.

ITEM #2 Elect Chair

MOTION: Nathaniel Ells moved to elect Carrie Kellow as Chair.

Seconded by: Hallie Whitcomb

Vote: 6-0, unanimous

ITEM #3 Elect Vice Chair

MOTION: Nathaniel Ells moved to elect Geetu Melwani as Vice Chair.

Seconded by: Heidi Trimbach

Vote: 6-0, unanimous

ITEM #4 Elect Clerk

Discussion ensued that the Clerk would take care of minutes. Geetu Melwani proposed a rotating minute taker. Chuck Gregory pointed out that he believed the Chair was not allowed to also take minutes according to VT law.

Further discussion ensued that the minutes just had to be motions, who made them and seconded, and the vote results and they did not need to be a verbatim transcript of the meetings. Chuck Gregory pointed out that according to VT Open Meeting laws minutes needed to be posted within 5 days. Additional discussion ensued and the Committee agreed that the minutes needed to capture what was required and highlight the main topics and points from the discussions. Chair Carrie Kellow added that she would include a memo for the agenda items in the meeting packets that would contain more information and discussed the requirements for the motions and voting in the minutes. Geetu Melwani offered to assist Heidi Trimbach with minutes if elected to Clerk.

MOTION: Geetu Melwani moved that Heidi Trimbach be named clerk of the Conservation Committee.

Seconded by: Chuck Gregory

Vote: 6-0, unanimous

Further discussion ensued that the Rules and Procedures state that proposed agenda items would be submitted to the Chair and posting would primarily be done by Chair Carrie Kellow as she works in the Town Office, one of the posting locations, and she would train other members on the posting requirements.

ITEM #5 Set Meeting Schedule

Chair Carrie Kellow Recapped that the meeting schedule was set in the Rules and Procedures to be the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month at 11:30 am. Chair Carrie Kellow added that she would make sure that she added this to the Town's Zoom and include the link on future agenda items. Further discussion ensued that a motion was not required for this agenda item as it was acted on with the Rules and Procedures.

ITEM #6 Rephrase proposed Mission Statement

Chair Carrie Kellow noted that agenda item 6 Rephrase proposed Mission Statement and agenda item 7 Rephrase proposed goals were on the same paper that was submitted to the Selectboard. Geetu Melwani pointed out that the Shopper had an article about the Conservation Committee that quoted directly from the Committee's mission statement and goals. Further discussion ensued that the Committee needed to update the Mission Statement to replace "Commission" with "Committee" and statutory references to Vermont Conservation Commissions needed to be removed and the Town Charter should be referenced. Discussion ensued for proposed revisions to the Mission Statement:

"Because human health is dependent on a healthy and diverse ecosystem, this Conservation ~~Commission~~ Committee seeks to preserve, create, and maintain vibrant natural habitats for a sustainable Springfield, ~~in accordance with goals consistent with~~ 24 V.S.A. § 4501."

Additional discussion ensued the concerns of referencing the direct Conservation Commission statute and the perception it could cause that the Committee had responsibilities or authority based on the statute.

Geetu Melwani commented that she did not feel that we were ready to revise the Mission Statement and felt that it would be more appropriate for the Committee to review the statute as a reference point and create a new draft Mission Statement for the next meeting. Chair Carrie Kellow added that Selectboard Member Michael Martin brought up a lot of points about sustainability of natural resources in Springfield and it would be good to refer to the Selectboard minutes also. Additional discussion ensued that the 30x30 Vermont legislation would be valuable to include.

Chair Carrie Kellow suggested a possible revision to the Mission Statement instead of saying consistent with 24 V.S.A. § 4501, it could read "to ensure the longevity of the natural resources of Springfield.". Further discussion ensued regarding the Town Charter, Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad, and Vermont Act 59.

Discussion ensued that budget season was in process for the Selectboard, and the Committee likely had time to finalize their proposed Mission Statement but would set a goal of having the Mission Statement and Goals complete at their next meeting. Chair Carrie Kellow suggested that item 2 under the goals they add inventory current conservation areas as a bullet point.

Further discussion ensued that the Committee wanted to make sure to post their agendas in additional locations beyond the three required posting places and the Town website, such as social media and the Springfield Co-op. Additional discussion ensued that community outreach would be one of the goals of the Committee. Heidi Trimbach commented that she would like to see researching best practices for ecosystems as a goal to demonstrate how effective the best practices could be. Geetu Melwani added that she believed this goal would fit in with goal 3 as 3a.

Further discussion ensued that the Committee would like to work with the School District to work towards getting some conservation programs established at the schools. Additional discussion ensued that the Committee felt that the projects should be seasonally reviewed, and outreach and education would be critical.

MOTION: Hallie Whitcomb moved to finalize the Conservation Committee Mission Statement and Goals at the next meeting on November 18, 2023, to be submitted to the Selectboard by December 2023.

Seconded by: Geetu Melwani

Nathaniel Ells confirmed that the amendments would be updated and finalized at the next meeting. Further discussion ensued that the goal for submitting the Mission Statement and Goals to the Town Manager by December. Elsa Ward in-person offered her assistance in working with the school and commented that having a youth committee member was very valuable in helping to create a diverse board. Additional discussion ensued regarding the value of involving youth in conservation efforts.

Vote: 6-0, unanimous

ITEM #7 Rephrase proposed goals.

This agenda item was discussed and acted on with agenda item 6.

E. FUTURE AGENDA ITEM PROPOSALS

The Committee members decided on the following Future Agenda Items:

- Social media and Goals
- Finalizing Mission Statement and Goals
- Update on the Hospital Hill project and possible adoption as an official Committee project (objective)
- Project list of proposed priority projects each member would like to work on
- Addition of an open forum to beginning of agendas for 20 minutes to have roundtable discussions regarding conservation topics

F. CITIZENS' COMMENTS

No Citizens' Comments at the time of the meeting.

J. ADJOURN

MOTION: Hallie Whitcomb moved to adjourn the meeting.

Seconded by: Geetu Melwani

Vote: 6-0, unanimous

The meeting adjourned at 1:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carrie M. Kellow, Recording Secretary