

**Springfield Conservation Committee
Committee Meeting, December 16, 2023
Town Office Select Board Meeting Room**

Members present: Carrie Kellow, Nathaniel Ells, Heidi Trimbach, Hallie Whitcomb;
Geetu Melwani

Meeting was opened by Carrie at 11:50 am with a roll call.

Committee Updates:

Nate – He met with Kelly Stetner of BRAT. The old water retention dam in Weatherfield is being decommissioned and that will leave some land for us to work with and for various ecological committees to weigh in on to decide what to do. A discussion was held about the ramifications of dam removal.

He met with Sean Murphy, Assistant Principal at the high school, at the High School to see if there are any teachers interested in working with us. River Valley Technical Institute is separate so they should be contacted. It was suggested that we reach out to Sherri Nichols, School District Superintendent, about the pollinator project. She suggested that working with the middle and elementary schools would start a pipeline of engaged kids. It is harder to get high school kids engaged. Work day by students can fulfill their volunteer hours. Perhaps high school teachers would be interested in involving their students in the inventory process. All agreed that sharing ideas and considering steps will take time.

Hallie – She had contact with Sherri Nichols about changing mowing practices. She made contact with BRIC. Working with the schools will take time but it's good to get started. She has reached out to Cheryl Joy Lipton and will keep trying to be in touch. Hallie measured hospital hill and it is 1/3 acre. All agreed to keep it simple, starting initially with a meadow. We also have permission to work on small corner lot and that could be a good place to start. The landscape class at the school or garden club might be interested in being involved, so we should do outreach to them.

Geetu suggested that we create a document with names and contact information and info about all with whom we have contact. This could be a spreadsheet.

A long discussion was held about emails, Google docs, a repository for minutes, reports, and access to information. There are considerations about the mandate for open meetings. Nate and Geetu each agreed to work out systems for this and to educate all members on using them.

Geetu - She attended meeting by Zoom of Empower VT. They talked about renewable energy standards and some of them in VT are not good. Green Mountain Power claims to be renewable but they are doing it by buying credits, so it's greenwashing. So the organization is pushing against current allowable standards, to disallow some of these practices. Geetu wrote to ask what language to use so we can write and express our concerns. She suggests we draft a paragraph stating our position to Kristi Morris of the House Committee on Environment and Energy.

Carrie – There was a presentation at the last Select Board meeting by the Connecticut River Conservancy about re-licensing of hydro dams. They are reaching out to towns along the river to push back because there are supposed to be mitigation of results on the land. They will now be using natural flow instead of peaking hours for the most part. There is an opportunity for us to ask for conservation easements on the property bordering the river in our town, and concerns about erosion. This is something it would be good to be involved in. We will have further discussions about our part in the licensing process.

It was agreed we can include friends and interested people in meeting minutes. There was a discussion of who to include. It's helpful to widen the group who know about our work.

Geetu moved to accept minutes, Heidi seconded. Passed unanimously.

Comments on minutes - Future minutes should note which meeting room. If somebody from the public speaks, last names should be used. Motions should be bolded.

Mission statement – discussion. Agreed as read.

Goals – sent out. Agreed after discussion.

Geetu will make a final draft and it will be gone over at next meeting. Then it will go to the Select Board. Nate suggested also submitting summary of committee updates to them so they can see what action has been taken.

Heidi asked about memberships in Native Plant Trust, Wild Seed Project and Ecological Landscaping Association. She will investigate costs for the committee and what the benefits would be.

Carrie will speak to Sue Dowdell, Library Director, and see what meeting she wants to come to.

Next meeting will be Saturday, January 6 at 11:30 in the Town Office Select Board Meeting Room

Carrie moved to adjourn, Nate seconded – passed unanimously

Meeting adjourned at 1:29 pm.

Respectfully submitted

Heidi Trimbach, Secretary