

## Fayston Conservation Commission

March 23, 2022

### MINUTES

**Present via Zoom:** Corrie Miller, Akhil Kaplan, Ned Kelley, and Lisa Koitzsch

1. Corrie moved to approve the minutes from 11/10/2021. Ned seconded, no further discussion, all in favor, motion approved.
2. Treasurer's budget update  
All FCC budget requests were approved at Town Meeting. This included: \$1,000 for the general FCC fund, \$3,500 for the Conservation Reserve Fund, and \$15,000 for the Town Forest Reserve Fund. Next year, FCC will ask for at least \$10,000 for the Conservation Reserve Fund to support future land conservation and protection efforts, wildlife corridor easements, etc.
3. Black Bears  
In November, the Mad River Valley Bear Initiative was formed to address many of the concerns and issues surrounding black bears. The Initiative is comprised of the tri-town conservation commissions, the Moretown Recreation Committee, Friends of the Mad River, the Stark Mountain Foundation, and Sugarbush's Employee Committee. The group has been meeting once a month and is developing educational materials for the MRV Chamber website, organizing a series of speakers, and identifying solutions to black bear and human issues. The first presentation will be held via Zoom on March 30 at 5:00 pm. Jaclyn Comeau, Vermont State Bear Biologist, will present information on bear biology and how people can modify their behaviors (trash, compost, bird feeders etc.) to stop conflicts with bears.
4. Community Recreation Visioning  
The VOREC grant of approximately \$410,000 has been approved. Most of the money will be used to improve connectivity between the trails above Lareau Farm, the Local Folk property, and downtown Irasville, and will include a bridge across Mill Brook, a welcome center, a new parking area, a riparian buffer, a pedestrian trail, etc. \$20,000 has been allocated to stewardMRV for marketing and trail ethics education. \$40,000 was allocated to the Community Recreation Visioning project – a collaboration between tri-town conservation commissions and Valley trail organizations to build a shared vision of recreational opportunities in balance with ecological integrity. First step in the CRV project is to find a neutral organizer and facilitator to help move the project forward. Corrie has been instrumental in moving this project forward and has served as the primary FCC representative to the collaboration.
5. Phen Basin  
The FCC sent a letter in January 2022 to MRR that notified the organization that we still think construction of the Hemlock Hill "Redemption Row" trail is a bad idea. The newly signed Camel's Hump State Forest Unit Management Plan appears to be in violation of the Phen Basin Ecological Protection Zone (EPZ) that does not allow mechanized vehicles. The Plan (Page 84) seems to allow the potential of mountain bike trail construction in the EPZ. In his response to the FCC letter, Bob Kogut affirmed the trail was not currently being pursued and that he had not read the new CH plan yet. All agreed that we should follow up with Bob and some of the MRR Board soon, and work with them to pull their trail proposal and

commit to not pursuing it any further. It would be important to invite Jared Cadwell, Friends of the Mad River, and Ky Koitzsch. Corrie will reach out to her board members. Akhil will draft an email to the Mad River Riders requesting a meeting and Corrie will create a Google Doc for him. Lisa will communicate with Jared.

#### 6. ARPA Funds

SB has approved the use of \$10-15k for a consultant for the Boyce Hill Management Plan. Jared asked Lisa and Corrie to submit some other FCC projects to the Select Board for ARPA consideration.

1. Knotweed project – Inventory all upland knotweed patches in Fayston and determine priority for removal. Funds would be used for paying an intern to record the inventory and organize a volunteer effort to remove knotweed.
2. Wildlife connectivity – Fayston’s wildlife corridor and habitat data is not as complete as Warren’s and Waitsfield’s and to participate fully in a tri-town wildlife connectivity effort, we need to gather more data together – perhaps using wildlife cameras, parcel data, east-west travel corridors, etc. Funds could be used to hire someone to do the work. Corrie and Lisa will be talking with State Biologist Jens Hilke soon to review tasks that need to be completed.
3. Impacts to wildlife from recreation – As Fayston continues to be an integral participant in the Tri-Town Community Recreation Visioning Project, it would be very helpful to increase our knowledge of the impacts people/bikes/dogs on trails have on wildlife in the Mad River Valley. Studies have been conducted in other parts of the country, but the goal is to protect MRV’s wildlife while still allowing the construction of new multi-use trails. Funds would be used to collect this data.
4. McCullough Barn – Use of the barn at the gateway to Fayston’s Chase Brook Town Forest would be greatly improved by the installation of a concrete floor. The cost of doing this would be approximately \$5k - \$7k.

Corrie and Lisa will write up the list and reach out to Jared.

#### 7. Green Up Day

May 7<sup>th</sup> (Ned’s Birthday!) is Green Up Day this year. Lisa will submit a notice soliciting a volunteer for a GUD Coordinator on both FPF and the Town Listserv. If we can’t find someone to take over the position, then FCC will proceed with the organization of the event in the same way it did last year.

#### 8. New Members

FCC will continue looking for new members. Akhil is working on two people he thinks might be a good fit – David Hodgson and Patty Paisley. Lisa will ask one of her neighbors (Jim and Kathy Elkind) if they are interested. Abby Dreyer and Eve Silverman are other possibilities. At some point, we should put out another notice.

#### 9. MRV Land Trust Idea – Conversations are happening across the Mad River Valley about starting a local land trust. This entity would entertain smaller projects than VLT does.

#### 10. Other Business: FCC will schedule a date and time to maintain the Fred Gilbert Trail.

#### 11. Next Meeting: April 27<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM

#### 12. Future Meetings

May 25, 2022, 06:30 PM

Jun 22, 2022, 06:30 PM

Jul 27, 2022, 06:30 PM

Aug 24, 2022, 06:30 PM

Sep 28, 2022, 06:30 PM

Oct 26, 2022, 06:30 PM

Nov 23, 2022, 06:30 PM

Dec 28, 2022, 06:30 PM