Fayston Conservation Commission Minutes

Wednesday, August 28, 2024

5:45 - 7:00 pm

Fayston Municipal Office (upstairs)

- **Call to Order**
  Meeting called to order at 5:50pm.

- **Approve minutes from June 26, 2024**
  Motion made by Patty Pasley. Seconded by Pete Colgan. All in favor and motion passed.

- **Public input**
  Welcome Matthew, intern with the Town of Fayston.

- **Chase Brook Management Plan workshop with Michael Brown of Birds Eye Forestry**
  Michael discussed scenarios regarding his potential role as a contractor/facilitator for Chase Brook Management Plan updates. We have established a subcommittee (Patty, Amy Dalton, Pete) to outline priorities and goals for Chase Brook (education, recreation, forest ecological considerations) and will propose next steps to the greater commission by November 2024. All members support a more comprehensive approach to updating the plan.

- **FCC administration**
  Newsletter - To be disseminated seasonally (four times/year). Next issue scheduled for October and to highlight summer knotweed work, Boyce Hill, and CRV work.

- **Project updates**
  - **Wildlife Corridors**: $8k ARPA funds period for extension is Dec. 2026. The question was raised regarding the potential to reallocate ARPA funds (SB allocated those funds initially). Current project comes with big questions such as how to approach gathering data on wildlife corridors. Substantive challenges for a project of this magnitude exist as evidenced by the work of Arrowwood Environmental. Andrea Henderson will talk to Patti Lewis about potential for funding reallocation. In an effort to better understand the feasibility of work

relating to wildlife corridors, the commission intends to invite Jens Hilke (VT Fish & Wildlife) to the Oct. meeting.

- **MRV Bear Initiative:**
  - Draft 2024 budget and funding request sent to MRVBI members June 25 - $500; Fayston funded its 2024 contribution in Dec 2023.
  - July 27, Aug 3, Sept 14 or 28, Oct 5 tabling at Farmers Market, Sept 7 at Morefest, Oct 5 at MRG Green & Gold, Oct 12 at Sugarbush Community Day.
  - Jaclyn Comeau, VF&W, joined MRVBI July 23 meeting with updates on MRV bear incidents, strategy, and communications.
    - Garbage can kits avail for $30-$45.
    - Have had discussions at ANR level re funding discounts for bear resistant trash cans/toters.
    - Stowe replaced town park receptacles with bear resistant receptacles and posted signage, which Jacyln collaborated on. https://www.townofstowevt.org/vertical/Sites/%7B97FA91EA-60A3-4AC6-8466-F386C5AE9012%7D/uploads/Be_Bear_Aware_-_handdout.pdf

      https://www.vtcng.com/stowe_reporter/news/local_news/town-of-stowe-buys-bear-proof-containers-for-parks-recreation-path/article_caa57b02-da25-11ed-9ed5-5f6697774e61.html

      https://www.townofstowevt.org/vertical/sites/%7B97FA91EA-60A3-4AC6-8466-F386C5AE9012%7D/uploads/Agenda_Summary_-_Bear_Proof_Containers_COMBINED_UPDATED.pdf

      https://www.townofstowevt.org/vertical/sites/%7B97FA91EA-60A3-4AC6-8466-F386C5AE9012%7D/uploads/Agenda_Summary_-_Bears_FINAL.pdf
    - Hunting season harvests have been higher than average.
    - Habitat protection and conservation critical.
    - Two bears in MRV breaking into cars and escalating to houses.
    - Euthanizing bears is a last resort. A bear was euthanized this year in Underhill. https://vtdigger.org/2024/05/31/bear-euthanized-in-underhill-displayed-exceptionally-rare-predatory-behavior/
    - VF&W will be collaring some bears to track/gather data.
  - MRVBI attended VF&W Senior Game Warden Chad Barret's talk at June 26 Rotary meeting.
  - Chad Barret joined MRVBI Aug 27 meeting.
    - Taking initiative to put forward legislation so that waste companies can't charge more for metal top dumpsters.
    - This is worst year so far for negative bear interactions.
    - Although overall smaller populations from 2022 (8,500) to 2023 (7,600), there are pockets of bigger populations in Stowe, MRV, Killington.
  - STR Tool Kits - approx 45 distributed.
  - Coordinating with VR&W for fall and spring community presentations, dates TBD.

- **Invasives/Knotweed:**
  - No UVM interns worked in Fayston July 17th due to flooding recovery work, work resumed July 24th.
  - July 27 and August 3 - Farmers Market tabling with UVM interns.
  - July 30, 4-7pm - Meet & Greet The Goats at Riverside Park in Warren.
  - Updated fundraising postcards/posters printed for Farmers Market tabling, including QR code to FMR donation site, and specific instructions to include "INVASIVES" in notes/memo section when making donation.
  - Project coordinator, Evan Horne's last day was July 12. He is continuing to provide support on a volunteer basis.
  - New day to day project coordinator selected, Evan Bak and GIS project coordinator hired, David Moroney.
  - Hans Estrin of UVM Extension joined July 24.
  - Association of VT Conservation Commissions post - **Conservation Commissions in the News - *June 1st*** – Conservation commissions in Fayston, Waitsfield and Warren employ goats and sheep to battle Japanese knotweed infestations in the Mad River Valley: Valley Reporter.
  - Last UVM intern workday in Fayston was August 14th.
  - Noelia Barrios-Garcia and Mariano Rodriguez-Cabal, UVM advisors and Lisa Kolb, State Hazard Mitigation Planner, and Steve Libby, Vermont Emergency Management toured sites in Warren and Waitsfield August 15th with end of season dinner hosted by George Shenk at American Flatbread.
  - QAPP comments received, and responded to. QAPP approval received August 20 from **Lauren Jenness Kneen, NEIWPCC Environmental Analyst.**
  - ARPA funds balance as of 8/28/2024 is $1,295, to be expended by 12/31/2026.
  - Intern expenses and out of pocket tool/supply expenses (sickles, rebar, markers, signs) will be finalized for next meeting.
- **Boyce Hill:**
  - We met and walked the land with the intended Boyce Hill Committee (Woody Dugan, Pete Colgan, Jas Smith, Harvey Blake, and Janet Saylor; Jared Cadwell, Jeff Coy and Jo Palmer were unable to attend). Project leaders were appointed for several projects.
  - Map for the kiosk, its final design element, is in final draft. Will be submitted with final copy to Wood & Wood for production, which they estimated would take 4-6 weeks. Hoping for late October installation.

        - A dog poop bag dispenser has been donated by StewardMRV and will be installed when the kiosk goes up.
        - Major mowing by Sugarbush expected as soon as possible for SB.
    - **Chase Brook**:
        - The camp did an excellent job cleaning out the barn after their sessions this summer.
        - Mowed, weed whacked, and tarped two pollinator garden sites.
        - No damage to bridge or trailhead site after flooding.
        - Patty will seek a donation of a push mower for the site.
        - Met with Matt Williams, Catamount Trail ED and Rob Willich with Mad River Riders on July 10 to discuss trail improvements and maintenance plans on the Mad River Riders docket. All proposed work aligns with both the VLT and Catamount conservation easements. Rob is hoping to get a crew scheduled for this work before the end of summer, unless storm activity impacts trails and delays their plans for routine maintenance.

    - **Conservation and Recreation Visioning**:
        - EIWG meeting held Aug. 21 to discuss draft recommended process for new trail development. Steering Committee meeting held Aug. 26 to discuss Rec and Trails group desired conditions statement and next steps. 2 Community Forums planned for fall - Oct 9 and Nov. 20. The next step for the CRV Steering CommitteeProject will be reflecting on the Current Conditions Statement and Desired Conditions Statement together. The group will then identify priority management strategies to bridge the differences between the two. Throughout this process, the Steering Committee CRV Project will continue to engage the MRV community through events, updates, and other outreach activities.
- **Other business**
    - Vermont Biodiversity Alliance membership: Andrea will gather more information on what this commitment entails and report back at next meeting.
    - 2024 MRV Wellbeing Survey presentation: Given project load and full agendas, we'll pursue the possibility of an abbreviated presentation or scheduling for early 2025.

Next Meeting: **Sept. 25, 2024 at 5:45pm**