Fayston Conservation Commission Minutes

Wednesday, Sep 24, 2025

5:45 - 7:00 pm

Fayston Municipal Office

1. **In attendance:** Brian Litmans, Woody Dugan, Andrea Henderson, Peter Colgan, Amy Dalton and Kim Phelan.
2. **Meeting Called to order at 5:52**
3. **Approved minutes from August 27, 2025 unanimously**
4. **FCC Administration - Budget discussion:** At the January 28, 2025 Selectboard meeting, the Board recommended that the Town Forest Reserve Fund be drawn down over time. The current balance in the Town Forest Reserve fund is $45,630, and no additional funds are requested for the Town Forest Reserve Fund in 2026. Andrea noted that the Conservation Commission advocated maintaining a balance of $30,000 in the Town Forest Reserve Fund, as grants often require matching funds, and maintaining a balance could increase Fayston's likelihood of being awarded grants.
    a. **Requesting funding in the Municipal Building Budget (acct #5470) of $400 for Powder Post Beetle perimeter treatment (2 treatments at $200 each) of the McCullough Barn**
    b. **Requesting funding of the Fayston Conservation Commission annual operating budget (acct #5706) of $6,750** (invasives management and riparian buffer restoration initiative (most work taking place alongside Fayston roadways and culverts), operating expenses, including AVCC membership, volunteer recruitment and recognition, MRV bear initiative, CRV Attitude with Gratitude education contributions). Expenditures to date and expected in 2025 are $4275 ($3500 invasive management and rest from reserves - total expected to be approx $5k, including survey markers, sickles - CC banners - $116, MRVBI -$500, CRV Attitude with Gratitude education-$250, etc).
    c. Requesting funding of the Conservation Reserve Fund (acct #3030) of $4,000.
    d. **Town Forest Reserve Fund (acct 3032) - No 2026 additional funding requested; potential and planned 2026 expenditures - $16,550**
    e. **Chase Brook Town Forest** -
        i. McCullough barn and town forest interpretive history signage - 2K.
        ii. Survey work (ecological, vernal pool assessment) - $4k
        iii. Pollinator work in collaboration with Bee the Change (tarps, guidance, seed, and interpretive signage) - $300 donation
        iv. Birdseye Forestry - $1k
        v. Expenditures to date and expected in 2025 are mgmt plan update $2,225, and allocation of invasives mgmt/conservation mix seed $1,660
    f. **Boyce Hill Town Forest**

i. **Mowing $4k budgeted for Sugarbush contingency**
ii. Maintenance of other equipment, ie., weed whackers - $250
iii. Signage - $1k
iv. Expenditures to date and expected in 2025 are historical interpretive video $2,700, signage $400, FCC caps $177, bridges/paths $1,167, stone steps $2,511

g. **Suggestion to move toward more line items for clarity and transparency** - suggested line items: maintenance, surveys, equipment, per diem for walks/talks, signage, etc. Andrea to connect with Sarah.

Chase Brook - Upcoming needs - future survey work (Chase Brook ecological assessment), Mgmt plan update, budget for Michael Brown for Draft plan - 1K. Goal for community to see anticipated costs as reserve funds are used. $500-1K for signage funds. There is a mower in the barn so equipment is not needed here.
Boyce Hill - Upcoming needs - line item for tools and equipment - 4K for field and brush mower. Could potentially use donation money too. Pond maintenance - potential future overflow improvements with a swale to prevent dam erosion. Educational field walks etc - $250? Kiosk and signage - 1K. Benches and equipment - $250. Trail work - none. Poop bags supplied by stewardMRV. Pond access and bridges look great!

5. **Planning Commission LUR update** Did not discuss due to time constraints
6. **Tri-Town collaboration** - administering grants has been wonky and challenging b/w communities. Examples - UVM interns, goat contract. Discussion around creating a 501(c)(3) to better coordinate. Could do Friends of MRVCC (side non-profit to get funds). Special rules for non-profits. An upcoming grant is for Healthy Ecosystems. Andrea is drafting a letter of support, Waitsfield is applying to continue invasives work.
7. **Project updates** -
    a. **Invasives/Knotweed** – North Branch Nature Center Invasives workshop held Sept 22nd well attended with attendees from all over the state, filmed by MRVTV. Upcoming tree planting late Oct/early Nov. Waitsfield CC submitting new grant applications for additional invasives funding. Met with Waitsfield and Warren CC chairs Sep 19 re tri-town CC collaboration and potential creation of 501(c)(3) - (working name, Mad River Watershed Alliance)
    b. **Chase Brook Maintenance** - Temporary repairs to the fencing on the bridge. Weeding around serviceberry trees with mulch added around the bases. Patty Paisley will bring deer repellent with next maintenance visit. Amy & Brian will erect fencing around the smaller serviceberry tree as the deer have seriously browsed it. Weedwhacking around tarped areas. Tarp by barn has been moved to prepare for more pollinator garden space. Tarp by parking area removed and stored in barn. Cover crop seeds scattered over both smothered areas.
    c. **Conservation and Recreation Visioning** - Fall CRV quarterly meeting Sept 23rd.

d. **MRV Bear Initiative –** Very successful tabling at Morefest and We are MRV Community Connections Fair. Article re BearWise receptacles in Valley Report - https://www.valleyreporter.com/index.php/news/local-news/20450-mad-river-valley-bear-initiative-installs-bearsaver-receptacles. BearWise newsletter published in VR and FPF. Upcoming VT Fish & Wildlife webinars on Sept 30 and Nov 6 publicized. Bear Story Contest open through October 12th.

e. **Boyce Hill –** voluntary stewardship day Saturday 9/27 8am to mid-afternoon; mission: view-shed management. Considering rental or contractual arrangement for chipping felled saplings and branches to aid soil restoration/ preservation. Hopes for an early start on annual mowing by Sugarbush haven't come true, but we're still being led to believe something will get underway soon.

8. **Other business** - none
9. **Items for next month's agenda**
    a. Updates on MRPath - Oct 1 is final public mtg regarding the scoping stage.
    b. Fall guided hikes - Phen Basin, Boyce Hill, and Chase Brook Town Forests

Next Meeting: October 22, 2025 at 5:45
November meeting date moved to Thursday Nov 20 at 5:45 (due to Thanksgiving holiday).