

Underhill Conservation Commission (UCC)
Underhill Town Hall
January 14, 2013

Present: Trevor Squirrell (chair), Barbara Greene, Merianne O'Grady,
Karen McKnight

- Opening remarks/Public comment:

Trevor clearly pointed out to those of us present that our Commission obviously is in need of new members. As stated, he has tried, in various ways, to interest Underhill residents, but no one has followed through on his/her initially-expressed curiosity. Karen suggested that perhaps we could increase our numbers by developing more concrete projects, on a more hands-on level. This might attract residents who could visualize actually 'working' on something and seeing the results of their physical involvement (as well as their input/suggestions.)

- Trails Committee update - Karen:

Karen reported that there will be a Road Commission hearing on Tuesday night (Jan. 15th) at the Underhill Town Hall regarding the new town road providing public access to the town's Cranebrook Trail. All UCC members were encouraged to attend. It is hoped that by the end of January, the long-standing litigation (beginning in the early 2000's) between the Town and two residents who are opposed to this access, should be finalized, and the Town may proceed with developing public access to the Cranebrook Trail.

Karen gave a brief synopsis re: the history of this litigation. She also stated that approximately five years ago, the Trails Committee and the UCC were considering a management plan for the Cranebrook Area. However, this litigation issue blocked any plans by the Town to provide access to the Area.

- Cranebrook Project - Trevor:

Since Karen updated/educated the Commission re: the current status of the Cranebrook Area / Trail, Trevor reiterated that the actual mediation between the Town and the two litigants is scheduled for January 24. More will be known in terms of proceeding on the Project after this meeting.

- **Aquatic Organisms Project (Fish Passage) - update - Trevor:**
Irish Settlement Rd. - Cranebrook: Reportedly, this project will be completed by/around Spring, 2013. Per Trevor, when it is underway, UCC will contact the nearby Underhill Central School re: possible educational opportunities (the improved passage for aquatic organisms and other environmental/ecological benefits) as a result of the new culvert design. Trevor also suggested that UCC educate the public about the improved effects of Underhill's Aquatic Organisms Project. Consider doing so through the 'comments' section of local newsprint (for example, *The Mountain Gazette*) as well as local on-line sites.

- **Green Up Day (May 4th) :**

Barbara Yerrick will not be coordinating Green Up Day in 2013. Dawna (Underhill Town Administrator) has offered to assist in the search for someone to replace Barbara, since no one else on the UCC is able to do so this year.

Trevor suggested that this vacant position be announced at the Underhill Town Meeting, coming up on March 5th.

- **Plant Sale (June 8th):**

Karen offered to be at the pay-station to accept money from the Sale. Barbara Greene and Merianne O'Grady will not be available to work the Sale this year. It was suggested that we contact Sue Kussarow to determine if she would assist in ordering the blueberry plants, and perhaps help out with getting the word out in the community re: donation of plants and other details. Again, the Town sandwich board will be utilized for advertising prior to the event.

- **Invasive plants education/outreach project - Trevor:**

Trevor indicated he was in touch with the State of VT, and was told that guidelines have already been developed through collaboration of several State departments/agencies which assist communities in organizing/implementing such projects.

UCC could initiate volunteer work-groups to remove invasives (such as honeysuckle, knot weed, garlic mustard, and wild chervil) and poisonous species (such as purple loose strife and barberry).

Barbara Greene pointed out that certain insects are not indigenous and cause injury to plant species (for example, the elderberry beetle) and could also be targeted.

Karen suggested that for education and outreach to Underhill residents / landowners, UCC could produce 'before and after' images of areas within the Town boundaries where invasives have taken over habitats formerly occupied by indigenous species. (Trevor stated that prior to settlement by the English, the principal forest species in our area was the beech; now it is primarily been replaced by maples.)

UCC could also seek assistance from groups like the Nature Conservancy, Jericho/Underhill Land Trust, and the State of Vermont on this project.

Trevor pointed out that it would be timely for UCC to have information about specific removal projects/workshops offered by UCC for volunteering opportunities, and then to post with specific dates/times/locations at the June 8th Plant Sale.

- New Business: Underhill's 250th Anniversary Celebration

Bill Wilson, who is a member of the Underhill 250th Birthday Celebration Committee, joined our Commission to inquire if UCC would be interested in participating in this upcoming event (Summer, 2013). And, if so, what are some ideas.

Trevor stated that UCC could provide information and/or trips to the parks and trails within Underhill. Other ideas: hikes to the 'highest point' (Mt. Mansfield); cemetery tours; historical information & walks along "ancient roads/trails/stone walls/historic houses & buildings; ecological highlights of local plants/organisms. Bill suggested that this Celebration should not only look back to the past, but also engage our Town in what might be ahead for Underhill.

- Meeting Adjourned: 7:30 p.m.

**- Next UCC Meeting: Monday, February 11, 6:30 p.m.,
Underhill Town Hall**

Respectfully submitted, Merianne O'Grady, UCC member
2/10/13 (DRAFT)