

Underhill Conservation Commission (UCC)
Underhill Town Hall
February 11th, 2013

Present: Trevor Squirrell (chair), Merianne O'Grady, Karen McKnight,
Jim Beebe (potential new member)

Opening remarks/Public comment: Trevor introduced the UCC members present to Jim Beebe, (Poker Hill Rd, Underhill). He is interested in learning about the issues/projects our Commission is currently involved in and is present to do so tonight.

Trails Committee update - Karen:

Karen reported that the scheduled January 15th Road Commission hearing regarding the new road to the Town's Cranbrook area, as well as the January 24th mediation meeting between the Town of Underhill (including the Trails Committee) and the two litigants re: Cranebrook Trail access were both canceled. Therefore, nothing has been resolved re this issue yet again...

Per Karen, the Trails Committee also has not met, since they are unable to proceed due to the litigation stalemate. Kari Papelbon (the Town of Underhill's Zoning and Planning Commissioner) and the Trails Committee have not met because the Committee has lacked sufficient number of members at recent meetings to form a quorum, so that the Commission can act.

The Trail Committee is keenly interested in moving ahead with the completion of this trail and is still awaiting the resolution of current litigation before they can proceed. They would like to inform the public regarding the Cranebrook trail (map, boundaries adjacent to private lands, etc.) by constructing two informational kiosks on the Cranebrook area land owned by the Town of Underhill. However, due to the current litigation, the erection of kiosks cannot proceed, even though the Underhill Development Review Commission gave its approval.

Cranebrook Project - Trevor:

Trevor would like to see our Commission initiate wildlife monitoring in the Cranebrook area, however, he suggested that we need to plan specific projects to present to the Underhill community. This would be a more effective way to really begin to get people interested in UCC (need more members!) and in actually doing volunteer work in specific town-owned/owner-approved areas.

Aquatic Organisms Project (Fish Passage) – update:

Trevor stated that approximately 4 years ago, a 'demo' session was held at Stevensville Road (Underhill) where a bridge crossing the brook below had been washed out and a culvert was built to replace it. The crucial issue of brook trout passage through /up streams via improved culvert design was also explained. This demonstration was utilized to better inform the public re: the benefits of constructing improved designs over several already existing public roads in our area (3 in Underhill; 1 in Westford). Monies have been available from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife (USFW), to turn such demonstration projects into actual improvements. Within Underhill the proposed projects are: Irish Settlement Road (Cranebrook), Beartown Rd (Mill Brook), and Barrett Lane (Roaring Brook). At this time, however, only the Irish Settlement Road improvement is underway. Underhill's other two projects might be delayed due to decreased availability of funds in 2013.

When the time is opportune, Trevor envisions UCC offering two-three hour workshops, with 1/2 educational and 2 1/2 hour actual work sessions.

Plant Sale / Invasive plants education/outreach:

To provide easy, quick, and effective education re: local invasive plant species, Trevor suggested that we take advantage of the Plant Sale to do this: display live examples of invasive plants (ex: brush honeysuckle, wild chervil, knotweed, garlic mustard, purple loosestrife, barberry, yellow iris) in the town park parking lot (right across from Town Hall) and offer brief identification workshops during the sale.

In addition, Trevor pointed out that outreach to the Nature Conservancy might be helpful in terms of providing materials to educate public re: invasives. In addition, the Town of Richmond is currently working with the Winooski River Basin Management folks to control the spread of such invasives as knotweed and garlic mustard. Trevor offered to contact both sources.

Closing Remarks/Comments:

Jim Beebe spoke briefly about his experience and how he might be helpful as a possible new member of the Underhill Conservation Commission. He stated he has approximately 20 years experience with not-for-profit sector. Currently, he is employed at the Howard Center. Jim has experience in grant-writing and has done both social-media and web-work. He currently resides on Poker Hill Road, (Underhill) and has been living there for approximately eight years.

Meeting Adjourned: 7:35 p.m.

Next Meeting: Monday, March 11, 6:30 p.m., Underhill Town Hall

Respectfully submitted, Merianne O'Grady, UCC member
3/17/13 DRAFR