



Waitsfield Conservation Commission Meeting

Minutes

October 20, 2025

Members Present: Bob Cook, James Donaldson, Phil Huffman, Ted Joslin, Leo Laferriere, Curt Lindberg, Chris Loomis, Gail O'Keefe

Members Absent: Bruno Grimaldi

Others Present: Lisa Coyle

The meeting was called to order by Curt at 6:00 pm. The meeting was held in person at the Town Offices and remotely via Zoom.

1. Welcome, Agenda Review

No changes were made to the agenda.

Curt noted that Bob had tendered his resignation from the CC, due to the amount of time being taken up by his work on the Wastewater Project. Commission members thanked Bob for his time and work on the CC.

2. Public Input

Lisa Coyle spoke of learning that Scrag Trail abutters would be approached regarding trail development, accounting for her presence at the meeting. It was clarified that the property being discussed during that conversation was the former Virginia Houston property, and not the Coyle's parcel.

3. Review/Approve June minutes

The minutes of September 15, 2025 were approved.

4. Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP) Grant Proposal

Curt indicated that this grant program has not been cancelled, and then outlined some of the new elements in the submission he is drafting, explaining that they build on previous efforts from the current grant. These include addressing multiple invasive species, continuation and expansion of the goat herd experiment, restoration of knotweed sites through plantings of trees and shrubs as well as other vegetation; and building connections with staff and students at Harwood Union to provide both classroom time and field experience related to floodplain restoration topics. Several maps will be submitted with the proposal. Curt noted that the draft document is available for those who would like to review the content.

Gail reported on a community service project with Harwood students, where knotweed was cut behind Waitsfield Elementary . She also detailed the logistics involved in moving the goat herd, and the benefit of grazing contiguous parcels along the riverbank. Further logistics, including the estimated cost per acre of goat treatment, were discussed. Gail will gather information regarding other goat programs and report on her findings at the next meeting.

The full cost of the work proposed is anticipated to be covered by the LCBP grant over a two-year period, with some funds continued to be provided by the towns for intern work; no increase in town expenditures is anticipated. The grant proposal is for \$120-\$130K, with \$90K in match (volunteer time and funds) from the towns.

MOTION: *Leo moved to recommend to the Selectboard that they approve the submission of this application to the LCBP Grant program. The motion was seconded by Ted, and passed unanimously.*

5. Floodplain Reconnection Study Update

Brian Voigt had not received the report in time to provide an update at this meeting, and Curt will reschedule this item to the November agenda.

6. 2025 Native Tree and Shrub Planting

Curt reminded the group of the upcoming planting at the Farley property, and indicated that Intervale will be on site the following week to complete the planting (700 total stems to be placed), mostly in Waitsfield and some in Fayston. He noted that Intervale is also donating some time for invasive species removal, and that the new BEE app has provided a small grant for the serving of refreshments at the planting event.

7. Wu/Fairgrounds Consultant RFP

Chris sought feedback on some portions of the draft RFP. It was agreed that the natural resource assessments, legal documents, and Act 250 permit for the Hastings subdivision should all be made available, as they are referenced in the 2014 Management Plan. The recorded letter of donor intent for the Fairgrounds property should also be included in the list of documents available for viewing. The inclusion of a document outlining the process was also discussed. The logistics and ordering (reverse chronology) of the document index were agreed upon.

Chris indicated his intent to publish the RFP within the coming week, and it was agreed to have a due date of December 1, with the CC committing to providing answers to any questions raised by November 24.

Chris and Gail will finalize the draft and publish it/email it to those known to be interested in responding.

8. Initial 2026/2027 Budget Discussion

Curt requested that members give some thought to upcoming program and financial needs so that a budget discussion with Bruno can take place at the November meeting. He confirmed that currently there is \$5K allocated for General Operating expenses, \$20K for Conservation Reserve, and \$10K for Invasive Species, of which \$2500 is designated for addressing emerald ash borer.

9. Financial Matters

Curt reported that this year's \$20K has been transferred to the Conservation Reserve Fund. Two invoices were presented for approval.

MOTION: *James moved to approve the reimbursements to Curt in the amounts of \$186 from the General Operating Fund for native seed sown on the Farley parcel and \$1114.48 from the Invasive Species Reserve for Plantra tree tubes used at the Farley site. The motion was seconded by Gail, and passed unanimously.*

Curt noted that Bruno has requested input on the proposed agenda for November's Tri-Town meeting, and suggested some discussion take place at that event regarding how the CRV project fostered collaboration as well as some discussion on the Northfield Ridge meetings. Leo suggested some discussion of what natural resource features which are currently underrepresented on public or conserved lands should potentially be conserved; it was agreed that a general discussion of the state of conservation in the area would be beneficial.

10. Other business:

- Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on November 17, 2025.
- Community Connections Fair – Leo reported a good turnout of organizations, as well as good attendance; Gail noted that there was appreciation expressed for the CC's work at Scrag and Wu Ledges, and that there were a few attendees who expressed interest in helping out or becoming a member of the CC.
- Other items – Phil reported that the stone bench has been installed at the Farley property, and that the opening celebration for that site will be held on May 2, 2026. Phil also reported that there has been no progress to date on Hadley Gaylord's installation of fencing; Gail offered to speak with Hadley about what system could be put in place to keep the cattle from the river.

10. Executive Session

MOTION: *A motion to enter Executive Session for the purpose of discussing real estate passed unanimously.*

The meeting entered Executive Session at 7:42 pm and returned to open session at 8:29 pm.

MOTION: *Phil moved to authorize Chris Loomis to work with the Town Administrator to develop a contract to engage a surveyor for research related to a Town-owned parcel, with costs not to exceed \$3000. The motion was seconded by James, and passed unanimously.*

11. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary