



Waitsfield Conservation Commission Meeting

Minutes

April 15, 2026

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

Members Absent: Bruno Grimaldi, Ted Joslin

Others Present: Rebecca Diehl, Misha Golfman

The meeting was called to order by Curt at 6:30 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.

2. Public Input

No members of the public asked for time to speak.

3. Review/Approve March minutes

The minutes of March 18, 2026 were approved.

4. Rebecca Diehl – Welcome and Introductions

CC members introduced themselves to Rebecca, then she introduced herself and spoke of her interest in serving on the CC.

5. Mad River Path (MRP) Funding Requests for CRV and Wetland Educational Efforts

Curt spoke of the general support expressed by the CC members regarding continuation of the CRV work, and noted that there were some questions surrounding the proposed wetlands educational project. He explained that Misha is requesting a \$1000 contribution for the CRV work.

Misha then presented information about the Attitude of Gratitude project, which is the initial practical outcome of the CRV work, and played the video which has been created. He spoke of the principles, resources, and other aspects of the project, and explained that multiple organizations will contribute to spreading awareness of the project, the video, and the concepts behind Attitude of Gratitude, with the intent to reach a wide-ranging audience. Phil explained

that there is a pledge associated with the project as well, another feature emphasizing the social change aspect of the work.

Misha outlined that the funds are to be used for creation of the film, the graphic design involved, and development of the associated web site. He explained that MRP is serving as the organization through which to pass the funds, and that the expenses to date have been covered by MRP reserve funds which he is seeking to recoup. He indicated that expenses are expected to be \$28K, outlined those who have already contributed, and noted that currently the project is about \$10K short of the funding goal.

Misha then outlined the proposed wetland education project, which was stimulated by a walk that he and Leo had taken through the Irasville wetland area, noting that it is a very effective location at which to provide educational materials. Misha explained that he had spoken with Friends of the Mad River staff and people from the Master Naturalist Program about the project, and that the plan is to install four informational panels along the boardwalk that runs through the wetland. Leo noted that the area provides examples of the various stages of wetland evolution and is a very suitable site for providing educational information. The estimated cost is approximately \$3400, and Misha indicated that he would seek grant or other funding if the CC decided to provide some initial sponsorship.

Curt explained that the CC would consider these two funding requests during the Financial Matters portion of the meeting.

Misha then provided a general overview of MRP activities, noting in particular the grant funding recently awarded for improvements, including a bridge, in the area of the Austin parcel. He explained that MRP would like to work with the CC on improvements to the Austin path from Lareau Farm to the new bridge.

6. Wildlife Corridor Mapping

Phil outlined the local wildlife corridor work which has been completed, and explained that it has been discussed that there is not comparable information available among the three towns. Obtaining more such data was identified as a priority project in the CRV work, and there is some funding remaining in the CRV budget to complete further mapping and field verification. Phil indicated that the first step in this effort would be assembling a group which would assess what information is currently available and plan for obtaining the data still needed. The next CRV steering committee meeting is in early June; Phil suggested that a longer planning horizon is needed before bringing a proposal to that committee.

There was some discussion regarding the purpose of tri-town coordination if the towns all plan to use the information for their separate zoning regulations, as well as whether this work would more appropriately be in the purview of the Planning Commissions for their work on Town Plans and zoning regulations. Phil noted that there are also CC-related purposes for the

gathering of corridor data, and Curt will put the larger topic on an upcoming agenda for further discussion.

7. Friends of the Mad River (FMR) Board Meeting Overview

Curt and Gail had attended a recent FMR Board meeting, where they and other local CC members had explained that they see a need for an organizational home for invasive species efforts, that FMR might serve as a vehicle to handle tri-town projects, and that there is a need for an approach which can help accelerate land conservation. He indicated that the FMR Board will be discussing their potential role in such efforts at an upcoming meeting.

8. Field Naturalist Masters Project Overview

Curt mentioned that there are funds included in the LCBP grant for this project, and that a proposal had been received from the person intending to do the work, which he would distribute to members. He outlined that the proposal includes identifying what effective restoration looks like, what has already been accomplished (including data and measurements), and recommendations for going forward.

9. Where the Wildlands Aren't: Expanding Ecological Representation in the Northeast

Curt provided the CC members with a link to a beta website which identifies priority areas in New England for forever wild conservation, explaining that the site may be a good future resource.

10. Financial Matters

Bruno had provided financial statements for review; Curt indicated that there were no significant changes to note. A transfer of grant funds to the Invasive Species Reserve still needs to take place.

James reviewed the options for a purchase of trail markers, and suggested ordering 1000, in two additional colors.

MOTION: *James moved to purchase 500 each of white and orange trail markers from Neutron for a cost of \$1835, funds to be taken from the general fund. The motion was seconded by Gail, and passed unanimously.*

Curt proposed purchasing work gloves for the interns who will begin work on June 1, explaining that The Vermont Glove Company had offered a 50% discount, and Curt noted that this purchase would be able to be applied to the grant match requirement.

MOTION: *Curt moved to expend \$600 for the purchase of work gloves for intern and volunteer use. The motion was seconded by Leo, and passed unanimously.*

These two expenditure approvals result in a \$2177 balance in the current fiscal year's general fund; it was agreed to discuss the use of the remaining funds, along with the requests proposed by Misha, at the May CC meeting when Bruno will be available.

11. Other business

- Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on May 20, 2026.
- Harwood Service Day – Gail reported that she will be working with students to plant willows and conservation mix in the area behind Waitsfield Elementary where they removed knotweed last year.
- Gaylord field fencing – Gail explained that the fencing is still awaiting Selectboard approval.
- Farley Park Opening Celebration – Phil reported that the event is scheduled for May 2, that the bench is in place, and that Charlie Goodman is overseeing the work on the access from Route 100. He also noted that Dave Knoop will be planting a red maple near the bench for a reduced cost, that Wood and Wood is working on signage, and that there may eventually be a small kiosk and potentially a small path/story walk on the site. It was agreed that signage to prevent use of Hadley Gaylord's tractor access should be installed.

13. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary