

**Minutes of New Hartford Open Space Preservation Commission (OSPC) Regular Meeting
Monday, August 23, 2021 6:30 p.m., Sessions Conference Room, Town Hall**

Members present: Doug Roth (chairman), Bill Michaud, Madeline McClave, Karen Griswold-Nelson, Jean Darlington (secretary), Eva Barham (alternate). Absent: Rusty Warner. Guest: Chris Malik. Doug called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. Doug asked for a volunteer to serve as temporary chairperson to run this meeting because he was attending by telephone. Bill volunteered. Jean nominated Bill, Karen seconded, and members voted unanimously in favor of Bill chairing this meeting. Bill then seated Eva as a regular member for this meeting.

Approval of minutes: Jean D. moved that we approve the minutes of June 28, 2021. Karen seconded. Madeline requested the following amendments:

5b, first bullet: 1st sentence should read, “... trail into *the* NHLT’s *Aranow* parcel ...”

5b, second bullet: 4th sentence should begin: “*NHLT organized volunteers who worked* under ...” Last sentence of same paragraph should end, “... for release *at Jones Mountain and* on other town properties next year.”

5c: 1st sentence should read, “Madeline reported on a very well-attended *NHLT* bird walk *from the Goula Preserve to Phillips Farm*, led by Fran Zygmunt.”

5d: 2nd sentence should read, “*Bill, Jean D., Alison Murdock, and Madeline* met on June 23 and walked the length of the trail. Bill is developing a plan to block off *several of* the steeper *pathways to the river*, where erosion is a concern.

3rd sentence should begin, “The plan *update likely* will also include ...

Jean D. moved we accept the minutes of June 28, 2021 as amended. Karen seconded and the motion passed unanimously. Bill acknowledged the minutes/notes from the July 26, 2021 workshop meeting at which we did not have a quorum.

Jean D. moved that we move part of item 5, new business, to the next item of the agenda. Karen seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

New business: Bill announced the sad news that longtime OSPC member and former chairperson Jean Cronauer had passed away on Saturday, August 21. He praised her dedicated service to the Town of New Hartford over many years. He stated that her contributions will be felt by the people of New Hartford long into the future. Karen, Jean D., and Madeline recalled her important longtime work for the Northwest Conservation District, her belief in the importance of educating children about conserving the natural world, and her contributions to preserving open space land in New Hartford. Doug said she was an example for all of us to remember as we work to carry her torch forward. According to her obituary (<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/telegram/name/jean-cronauer-obituary?pid=199892447>), there will be a Celebration of Life on Friday, September 10, 2021 from 4 to 7 p.m. at Brodie Park, 580 West Hill Road, New Hartford.

OSPC Alternate: Jean D. announced that the Board of Selectmen had appointed Eva Barham to serve as an alternate on OSPC and that Eva had been sworn in by the Town Clerk.

Updates on Current Open Space Preserves and Trails:

Butler Preserve: OSPC will reschedule the meeting with Dan Jerram, Alison Murdock to walk the Helen Butler Memorial Trail to continue discussing updates to the management plan. Bill reported that he has drawn up some detailed plans for structures to control erosion. Madeline volunteered to coordinate with Dan about scheduling an official opening ceremony for the trail during fall foliage season (date TBA). We discussed signage.

Jones Mountain: Madeline reported that she had heard of a fallen tree on the trail. Bill volunteered to walk up and see if the town crew will need to remove it with a chain saw or if the tree is small enough for volunteers to remove it with hand saws. Eva volunteered to help. We discussed the need for the town to budget more for maintenance of town-owned land.

Work on Updating Open Space Plan: Jean D. volunteered to continue working on updating the 2002 Open Space Plan and sharing her edits with the other commissioners, who volunteered to read and help edit. We discussed the importance of emphasizing the health and social benefits of open space planned in concert with inclusive zoning practices such as multi-family, cluster, and affordable housing. The Plan should also promote the benefits of open space to the well-being of present and future New Hartford residents and visitors. It should dovetail with current State of CT zoning rules and should be based on science. For example, subdivisions with 2+ acre zoning can create habitat fragmentation, whereas close

neighborhoods with smaller lots and large areas of contiguous open space for residents to enjoy are better for environmental conservation and wildlife corridors. Madeline pointed out that administrative advocacy is needed to work with the State of CT DEEP on such matters as water and sewer approvals. Doug recommended that the Open Space Plan name some of the public and private funding mechanisms that are available. Madeline volunteered to present potential sources of funding and other support at the next meeting. She named some examples, such as the Trust for Public Land, the State of CT Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program (OSWA, <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Open-Space/Open-Space-and-Watershed-Land-Acquisition-Grant-Program>), and federal Highlands Act funding (<https://www.fws.gov/northeast/highlands-conservation-act/grant-process.html>). Karen asked if New Hartford had a staff person who can work to procure funding for cluster housing and open space collaboratively. We discussed the need for departments and commissions to be aware of interconnectivity between zoning and open space.

More new business:

- Karen advocated for the importance of town commissions collaborating on promoting land use that incorporates passive recreation as an important subset of recreational activities. She reported on a conversation with Jeremy Schaller of the recreation commission in which they discussed the large segment of the population that wants more passive recreational opportunities on town-owned land. For example, the conservation and recreation commissions could work together to coordinate the land uses at Brodie Park South, such as pollinator gardens, wildlife habitats, hiking, dog-walking, and the recreation commission's recent idea of disc golf.
- Madeline reported that the New Hartford Land Trust (NHLT) is planning an informational walk about forest ecology and insects for the early afternoon of September 18 on a NHLT preserve, preceded by a Zoom presentation on the evening of September 16th.
- We discussed planning a public nature and history walk along the Franklin P. Kearney Memorial Nature Trail at Brodie Park South, possibly in early October. Madeline stated that the NHLT may be able to help by finding an expert in plants or animals to help lead the walk, and also by publicizing the walk.

Executive Session to Discuss Real Estate: At 8 p.m., Jean D. moved that we enter executive session to discuss real estate. Madeline seconded and the motion passed unanimously. At 8:07 p.m., Jean D. moved that we leave executive session. Karen seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Next meeting: Monday, September 27, 2021, 6:30 p.m., New Hartford Town Hall

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Darlington, Secretary