

Mount Holly Conservation Commission
Draft Meeting Minutes

The October regular meeting of the

7:09 pm

by Phil Crane. It was held in the Community Room below the Library.

David Martin, Megan Litweiler (via Zoom), Peter Smith, Jeanmarie Fitzgerald, Phil Crane, Sue Presson, Phil Leonard, Jim Corven.; Steve Hazelton (guest), Zapata Courage (via Zoom).

NOTE: Only two agenda items were covered in this meeting, the presentation by Rutland District wetlands ecologist Zapata Courage and the extension of terms of present officers for one month. A summary of the first will be appended to these minutes, and the Commission decided affirmatively on the extensions by unanimous vote.

Next meeting

The next regular scheduled meeting of the MHCC will be held on Tuesday, November 5, at 7 pm.

Adjournment

As members indicated no further items, Phil Crane declared the meeting adjourned at 8:29 pm.

Minutes recorded and submitted by Phil Leonard, clerk.

APPENDIX: Presentation Summary by Jean Fitzgerald (J.F.) and Dave Martin (D.M.) - slightly edited

More details (recording and/or slides) on the presentation are expected.

J. F. - Zapata gave a history of the lake documented early on as the largest swamp in the region. The first dam was, as we know, created for economic reasons to create water power to run mills. Then later, it was renamed Star Lake as a recreational lake for the community.

She defined the different types of wetlands based on water table and soil type but did not define Star Lake as one; rather, **defined Star Lake as a shallow, warm water lake**. However, she gave a detailed description of the natural progression of succession to wetland. Then gave reasons for the importance of wetlands for breeding of fish, habitats for many animals, including beavers, moose, etc, filtering pollution and sediments, and rare plant habitat and other plant diversity.

Given Star Lake's history as a recreational asset it is possible we could continue our efforts to include limited harvesting (through permitting reviews from both the wetland and the lakes and ponds state divisions). Though no guarantees were given, she encouraged us with the possibilities of permits for harvesting channels to allow for swimming, boating from the boat launch area and the boardwalk project. She mentioned that a boardwalk must meet specs, and if it passed those specs, no permit would be required.

She said a permit for the various projects would be for a **project specific purpose**. I took this to mean we could not combine a boardwalk project with a harvest for channels project. She compared Lake St. Catherine to Star Lake. We should contact their lake association for details on their efforts.

I also understood that homeowners on the shoreline would also be able to cut channels to allow for boat launch access. But she mentioned a 10' radius around docks is allowed. I find this insufficient for purposes of kayaking/boating. Ok for fishing perhaps?

Rules for a buffer zone were mentioned, but because of audio, I am unclear about those details. I heard about a 50' buffer zone, but Jim Corven said something about a 300' buffer for homeowners.

Zapata also talked about the importance of (vegetative) buffers to slow down flooding carrying sediments into the lake. This is another project which I have been thinking about since attending the September FOVLAP conference. Allison Marchione, state representative for Lakes and Ponds, evaluated the beach area some years back and also remarked that we should plan this project. Once we get the final Arrowwood report, we can write a watershed action plan as recommended and submit to both the wetlands and lakes and ponds divisions. I believe that is the first step.

D.M. - I would add that Zapata seemed ready to help us get permission to accomplish our goals. I suspect that if we develop a plan for where we would like the lake to be in 3 or 5 years she would be supportive.

What might be elements of a plan? A slightly enlarged open area around the dam and recreation area to enable more swimming and kayaking. A boardwalk to enable people to explore the marsh and study the ecological activity. Navigation channels to facilitate access by boaters to the boardwalk and other locations along the shoreline including access for land owners. Control of invasives

What activities might be required? Chemical treatment of milfoil. Enlarged bottom barrier coverage. Mechanical harvesting of lily pads near the recreation area, docks and for navigation channels

J. F. - Vegetative buffer is recommended for the picnic, beach area. I will ask Alison Marcione from DEC Lakes and Ponds to send her evaluation. I have some plans that are applicable.