

Meeting Minutes for Conservation Commission Monthly Public Meeting

Wednesday, July 16, 2025

6:00 P.M. In-person at City Hall & Virtually via Zoom

Meeting called to order on 7/16/2025 at 6:07 pm by Rose Vath.

Count of voting members: 6 (quorum)

Present Members: Rose Vath, Royce Meyer, Nolan Carver, Linden Chozinska, Jenn Brown, Jas Smith, Keir Barbaro (Parks liaison)

Absent Members: Maddie Cotter, Paul Marangelo

Rose Vath: Move to review and approve the meeting agenda

2nd: Jenn

Vote: Unanimous Consent.

Motion **Passes.**

Agenda Items

1. **Rose Vath: Opens floor to Review and Approve June Meeting Minutes**

2nd: Jas

Vote: Unanimous Consent

Motion **passes.**

2. **Public Comment**

- No members of the public present

3. **Rose Vath: Opens floor for discussion:** Presentation by Lake Champlain Sea Grant - Flood Resiliency: speaker **Alison Spasyk**

- On the new Flood Safety Act
- Last year Act 121 passed with a 2-year ed & outreach period to educate citizens on the concept and reasoning. DEC is figuring out how to add regulations to make us safer & want public input to help with that process.
- The rules don't go into effect until 2028.
- Context: flooding is the most expensive and deadly recurring hazard in VT; VT is unique b/c it's a mountainous state & the excess water tends to impact developed low-lying areas. An increase in annual precip and in heavy/extreme precip events.
- Historic river management has made us more vulnerable to flooding
 - Armoring riverbanks, carving out the paths we wanted rivers to take by modifying the landscape (dynamite use, etc.)
 - Sculpting river courses to accommodate roads & other development, often by straightening it

- Straightening the course increases the slope (shortens distance water travels) and increases the power of the water
- Shallower channels help raise the water table and allow a high water event to spread and be absorbed by a wide flood plain (low erosion); digging the channel deeper keeps the water from spreading in a flood plain but it digs the channel even deeper and causes more severe erosion (lowers the water table, too). Sediment moves downstream and collects, impacting water quality, etc.
- 5000 miles of river have been assessed & 75% are in channel cycle.
- Natl. Flood Insurance Prog doesn't address erosion hazards, but prop owners are still at risk if structures are in the Fluvial Erosion Hazard Zone (mapped by DEC, not FEMA)
- VT needs to figure out the areas of river corridors that are most at risk & project where the channel is expected to move over time to prevent development within those areas
- Many of FEMA maps were created during the 1970s and don't account for the increase in flooding risk that we're facing in 2025. New FEMA maps are in development, hopefully by 2027/28. They're also changing the modeling to incorporate stormwater/runoff stats.
- Some towns have adopted River Corridor Bylaws to protect further than NFIC, but not all. The patchwork effect renders any measures less successful.
- Act 121, Flood Safety was passed in the wake of the 2023 flooding. Gives DEC authority to limit new development in river corridors. Strengthens oversight & gives permission to remove dysfunctional dams. Protects and restores wetlands.
- Updated mapping to figure out where wetlands are in order to preserve as much as possible. Historically VT has lost wetlands b/c of river management practices.
- 121's education mandate is mainly with regard to the subject of river corridors, as this is an unfamiliar concept to many.
 - Focus is on the riparian areas that have a possibility of returning to a more natural condition; downtown areas will be mostly exempt from this, as they've already "locked in" the rivers & more development in those areas will not create more problems than already exist.
 - Historical development patterns also contribute to vulnerability
 - Inundation damage: flooding in structures and developed areas
 - Erosion damage: 75% of the cost of flooding is due to erosion
- Towns will have the opportunity to regulate river corridors on their own as long as they meet some requirements; if they choose not to, the state will have jurisdiction
- This legislation doesn't deal with a lot of the small streams
- Flood Ready Atlas has layers for GIS layers relevant to flooding – MCC can refer to this with subdivision applications

4. **Rose Vath: Opens floor for discussion:** Hubbard Park Signage Project Update

- Project moving to officials; grant agreement will start August 1. The only items that have changed are the timeline.
- Start with initial concept, developing the language and images for the signs: will be Sept - Dec (with January as a backup as needed)

- Design work with artist ready to begin in Feb. 2026, with print files ready by April
- Printing in May
- Installation June-Aug 2026
- Outreach in August
- Trail walk in Sept
- Final report Dec. 2026

5. **Rose Vath: Opens floor for discussion:** Small Streams Workshop Update

- Nothing yet; Rose will follow up with Paul

6. **Rose Vath: Opens floor for:** Parks Department Update

- Trail development is going well; wetlands are being skipped for now (awaiting permitting). Outhouse will be installed next week (late July).
- The work is paced very differently this year without the Youth Conservation Corps.

7. **Rose Vath: Opens floor for discussion:** Topics for August/September Meeting

- If we don't have quorum for the August trail walk, we'll have a separate August meeting; if we do, we'll use the walk as the official meeting for the month.
- The next official meeting we'll have a subdivision permit review.

8. **Rose Vath: Opens floor for discussion:** Round Robin

- Interest in Flood Resilience Presentation from Lake Champlain Sea Grant Program? Rose can coordinate to get it on the July agenda.
- Wetlands Mapping is being updated! The State's opening a portion of the map to public comment right now. Go to Vermont Natural Resources Atlas to participate.
- Join the Vermont Association of Conservation Commissions listserv by emailing vtconservation+subscribe@googlegroups.com

Rose Vath: Motion to close the forum and adjourn.

2nd: Jas

Vote: Motion **Passes**.

Meeting adjourned at 7:21 pm.

Next meeting is Wed., August 20, 2025, 6:00-7:30, hybrid at City Hall & on Zoom.