

Richmond Conservation Commission – March 10 Meeting (Summary)

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Conservation Commission, meeting minutes, Phragmites removal, Vermont Master Naturalist, Conservation Reserve Fund, Farmers Market tabling, invasive species, community engagement, volunteer recruitment, project updates, meeting approval, action items, resource allocation, public education., Conservation Reserve Fund, invasive species, herbicide use, management plan, volunteer screen, over rocker, RFP, community engagement, farmers market, data collection, salamanders, professional services, guiding principles, organic land care, project funding.

Meeting Date: 3/10/26

Meeting Time: 7:00PM

Attendance: RCC Members -Sam Pratt, Jeanette Malone, Trevor Brooks, Susannah Zeveloff, Kit Emery,

Members of the Public: (Jon Kart, Trevien Stanger).

Minutes Prepared by: Kit Emery

Outline

Roll Call and Introductions

- Sam Pratt welcomes everyone to the Richmond Conservation Commission meeting on March 10th, 2026. We have a quorum of 5 here and we are recording.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

- Sam confirms a quorum at RCC meeting and request's introductions from the members of the public: Jon Kart and Trevien Stanger.
- Kit Emery agrees to take minutes.
- Sam moves to approve the February meeting.
- Motion made, seconded, and **approved unanimously.**

Agenda Adjustments

- Minor addition deferred to "matters arising" section Unanimous approval of the minutes by all RCC members.
-

Discussion on Non-Related Aspects of Note Taking

- Jeannette suggests the time and burden of preparing meeting minutes can be too long, especially for those who are working on other projects within the commission
- Sam suggests that our approach should be to allocate less time to meeting notes, ideally within 1–3 hours.
- The group emphasized that minutes should be **concise**, focusing on key points rather than detailed transcripts. Things that must be captured are motions and votes. Example, whoever motioned, whoever seconded? If there's a proposal of some kind that we're voting on that is important, that needs to be captured and put in the minutes. Aside from that, it doesn't have to be exact. The main goal is to catch the main thrust of the meeting, required elements are below:
 - Focus on brevity
 - Votes/motions (including who made/seconded them and outcomes).
 - Keeping minutes brief.
 - Potentially rotating responsibility more evenly..

Note: Members noted that recordings can be used for detailed reference instead of over-documenting everything. There was concern about burnout,

Action: The chair will review legal requirements and provide clearer guidance at a future meeting

Town Meeting Update

- Sam To begin, as many are already aware, Town Meeting Day recently took place. I would like to extend my gratitude to everyone who contributed to the Front Porch Forum by providing information and raising awareness among Richmond voters regarding the Conservation Reserve Fund, its purpose, and its benefits for the community. Your efforts in encouraging residents to participate in the voting process are greatly appreciated.
-

Richmond Conservation Fund Update

- Sam opens by announcing that the **Conservation Reserve Fund** passed at Town Meeting Day with strong support (~73%), expressing appreciation for outreach efforts and noting its importance to the commission's work. They acknowledge some opposition due to tax concerns or differing priorities but emphasize the overall positive outcome.
 - Facilitate updates on ongoing projects (e.g., Vermont Master Naturalist work), offering support and encouraging collaboration.
 - Keep discussions **focused and time-managed**, occasionally redirecting conversation to stay on agenda.

- Highlight the need for **planning and coordination** (e.g., timing materials requests, aligning with Select Board processes, ensuring proper preparation for projects like Phragmites removal).
 - Encourage **practical considerations** such as budgeting, equipment needs, and safety.
-

ACFC Management Plan Update

- Sam says the **ACFC management plan** is almost finished.
- They transition the meeting forward by:
 - Moving through agenda items efficiently
 - Introducing the next item (a new commission applicant)
 - Maintaining structure and momentum throughout

Overall, Sam acts as an **organizer and facilitator**, balancing celebration of successes, coordination of ongoing work, and keeping the meeting productive and on track.

Budgeting the \$50 Membership

- The group discussed paying a \$50 fee to join the Vermont Association of Conservation Commissions.
 - Long-term idea: include it as a recurring line item in the town budget to avoid yearly debate.
 - Short-term solution: use Conservation Reserve Funds (CRF) for now.
 - A motion was passed to spend \$50 from CRF, with follow-up planned on future budgeting.
-

Farmers Market Outreach

- Members in RCC are interested in tabling at the farmers market for education and community engagement.
 - Key lessons from past efforts:
 - Engagement requires interactive elements (games, visuals, signage).
 - Preparation takes significant time.
 - Topics like invasive species (e.g., phragmites) or broader conservation work.
 - Use banners, handouts, and existing materials to explain the commission's role.
 - Likely 2–3 tabling events this season (not weekly to avoid burnout).
 - Work in pairs and rotate participation.
-

Review RCC Applicant

- Sam opens the discussion for Trevine to introduce himself to the Commission.
- He collaborates directly with students on activities ranging from tree identification and food forests to watershed studies, covering essential topics such as water safety and the effects of upstream and downstream actions.
- Trevine's background features experience in land stewardship and both passive and active rewilding, involvement in tree planting initiatives, work at the Intervale Conservation Nursery, and service on the board of the Society for Ecological Restoration.
- The final step is obtaining approval from the Select Board.

Outcome: A motion was made and passed unanimously to recommend his appointment to the Conservation Commission for a term ending May 2027.

Salamander Project Funding

- Jeanette made a request for ~\$115 for equipment (notebooks, safety lights).
- Next step is to send the request to Select Board for approval.

Outcome: A motion was made and passed (with one abstention) to recommend funding from CRF.

Invasive Species Management Strategy (Main Discussion)

- RCC decided to rethink its approach before issuing RFPs.
- Key ideas:
 - Use an existing management plan (from Jon Kart) as a strong foundation.
 - Update it rather than start from scratch.
 - Treat upcoming work as a **pilot project** (likely 2–3 years).
 - Possibly focus on multiple sites (e.g., Overrocker + Volunteers Green) to compare results.

Approach to Implementation:

- Don't delay action for a full inventory—start work while mapping and learning.
- Contractors can help with both treatment and data collection.
- Funding likely handled year-by-year rather than multi-year commitments.

Herbicide Use and Concerns

- Major topic with mixed comfort levels.
- General consensus:
 - Herbicides may be necessary in some cases (e.g., knotweed).
 - There are concerns about ecological impact, public perception, and long-term effects.
- Identified needs:
 - More education before making decisions.
 - Develop shared guiding principles (possibly from established frameworks like organic land care).
 - Avoid over-reliance on external opinions without first building internal understanding.

Suggested Next Steps:

- Do internal research first (articles, frameworks, best practices).
- Then consult experts with specific, informed questions.
- Avoid public outreach on the topic until the group has a clear, unified position.

- And—most importantly—taking a careful, informed approach to invasive species management, especially around sensitive issues like herbicide use.

There's a strong emphasis on **not rushing, avoiding burnout, and building a solid knowledge base before acting publicly or committing funds.**

Exploring Unrelated Topics Concerning Phragmites

- Susanna expressed interest in **long-term restoration**, especially how areas cleared of invasives can later be **repopulated with healthy native species**.
- Trevian shared concerns about large-scale invasive removal methods that rely on **heavy equipment and herbicides**, particularly near waterways, noting high costs and environmental trade-offs.
- Jon suggested exploring **alternative approaches**, such as testing different methods on smaller plots to see what works best over time.
- Emphasized uncertainty around what should be replanted after removal and interest in learning effective strategies.
- The group agreed that **manual vs. herbicide removal** is an important and ongoing discussion, with **pros and cons to each approach**.
- The conversation concluded with a motion to **recommend Trevian's appointment** to the Conservation Commission (term ending May 2027), which was **made and seconded**.

Wrap UP

- Sam: If there's nothing for the next meeting or any matters arising, I'll accept a motion to adjourn. Motion? Second? Both noted. All in favor say "aye." Thank you—see you next time.

9:00 Meeting Adjourned