



Waterbury Conservation Commission
Draft Meeting Minutes
Tuesday 7/18/2017, 7:00pm

Location: Conference Room, Municipal Offices

Attendees: Allan Thompson, Nick Waringa, Steve Hagenbuch, Katrina VanTyne, Joan Beard, Mike Hedges, Meg Taylor, Krista Battles

Introductions

- Krista Battles in attendance – interested in learning more about the commission.
Summer naturalist for Stowe Land Trust

Approve Minutes (thanks Katrina)

- Reviewed and approved

Review and approve agenda

- Addition – Conservation Commission blog posting
- All else approved

Shutesville Hill Wildlife Corridor updates

Next presentations ideas; field walks, landowner mapping/concept rollout

- The concept roll-out will be a strategic show and tell – formal invitation to the public to join the conversation
- Joan suggested having somebody from commission on presentation panel with hope that our town will see us as having an active role the in new group. Steve H agreed. Nick also agreed that there would be good value in doing so because people in attendance are members of our community, giving us local credibility
- Allan said we are on deck for another presentation in early fall. One idea that came up is the desire for more frequent field walks/tours. Mike talked about the tracking workshop in past. Nick suggested a sponsored hike up Pinnacle. Steve added that the hard part is finding place to go that's public or a private landowner willing to host. Most in favor of an outdoor naturalist hike in the fall rather than an indoor presentation. Joan mentioned the Smeltzers and Crawford property as potential hosts. Allan asked that we come up with a potential list of landowners. We'd like to lead the field walk ourselves or with Stowe Land Trust rather than bringing in someone from outside with the goal of continuing educational opportunities and getting interested people involved ahead of concept roll-out
- Katrina is managing the Shutesville Hill webpage and wanting input on what to include. We talked about webpage on "staying connected". On Monday Kristen Sharpless will have finalized maps to add as well.

Energy Planning: Act 174 and resource constraint mapping review

Allan gave a recap on background – Steve L has tasked us with identifying what we care about

- We reviewed the June 26th meeting with the Planning Commission. Priority areas to consider from that meeting include 1) High elevation considerations, 2) Project size thresholds, 3) Aesthetics
- Steve reminded us that if we propose no renewable energy development in certain areas, that applies to all types of development.
- Allan suggested this is a unique opportunity to include Shutesville Hill into our town plan and subsequent zoning regulations. Questions that came up: Can we say, “No certain size MW solar, no certain # towers, etc.” Can we define these things? Are maps too anecdotal?
- Nick would like to protect the corridor more with zoning language. In defining our intent, we provide the PSB with more information on the town’s intent (esp. to protect state connectivity blocks)

We’ve done what we can already to get stuff to commission to get into draft due at end of July. Then we have a year to submit final plan. Still opportunity to amend draft. We will also provide our feedback on how to improve town plan.

Some suggestions:

- Nick - we should show up and defend our additions to the plan. We run the risk of having a stale plan because of how things change over time
 - a. Species of greatest conservation need – what’s realistic when we make lists of species beyond this list? how or who defines these?
- Steve - we have to provide something more to this plan than the regulatory maps. Can we look to other towns doing energy planning to see how their conservation commission is handling this? He will contact someone in Middlesex or another town that received grant
- Mike – we need to build into town zoning regulations after built into town plan.
- Joan – if we start to add too many protected species/environments, we might not get what we want/what’s most important
- Allan – there are different mechanisms for how to minimize impacts. Each species and impact on each species is different which is why mapping can be hard
- Note: We’re not trying to prohibit renewable energy development, we just want it to happen as responsibly as possible. Rather than just saying “no”, we want a map of where we want development
- Language suggested by Allan: “Within Shutesville Hill Corridor, we are interested in protecting species of greatest conservation need”. Can we identify a guild of species and say can’t have impact on the guild? Then, leave it up to developer to prove that they’re not impacting those species
- Allan - We need a regulatory tool for protecting species of greatest conservation need (high and medium priority?) – ask to put it in the draft and then define further. How do

we determine undue impact? Do we want people to come to the WCC to investigate and have further conversation? We realize there is a danger of WCC members not being experts in the field.

Mike spoke to aesthetics – The Planning Commission agreed that aesthetics are important. We would like to propose stricter elevation restrictions – high elevation = how do we define? See mapping in relation to parcels/road to get feel for it

- Steve will make map showing contours in Waterbury 1500 ft and up at 200 ft intervals (East side only) - 2500 ft is what can sit on comfortably for energy plan.
- Allan said we will want to start with public outreach to get community backing of idea. Mike suggested we start with a questionnaire. We recognize that it's difficult to engage in this conversation because it is so subjective.
- Allan suggests we do a GIS view shed analysis and pay someone to do it. Not possible to do on our budget, so we will need a grant.

Next Steps:

- We will give the Planning Commission a map of Shutesville Hill corridor and brief paragraph defining what it is
- Allan will provide language similar to Act 250 to protect site class 1 forest soils
- We will look at draft plan when it comes out and review
- We need to give species of greatest conservation need more thought and consideration before sharing

Nominations for positions

Secretary (2 positions), nominations: Joan, Nick, Katrina

- We agreed not to elect a secretary and instead all participate in rotational order (based on how listed) excluding chair and treasurer. Nick will send template to everyone and Allan will send minutes to Carla after approval

Treasurer, nominations: Joan, Meg, Nick

- Nick elected

Chair, nominations: Allan

- Allan elected

Brief Updates

Mike spoke about the Waterbury Stowe Byway expansion.

Our web presence that Stowe Area Association maintains – there will be a blog to change monthly. The SAA would like a couple paragraphs of anything to do with byway to see what's going on in this area. We will work on a blog post for October. Steve suggested "what species of trees turn what colors?"

Next Meeting: August 22nd