

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
DRAFT MINUTES
May 20, 2015**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Al Alessi , Cyndy Kozara, Lynn Peterson, Bethany Powers
MEMBERS ABSENT: Byron Quinn, Lea Kachadorian, Alan Willard
OTHERS PRESENT: William Padlipchak, Tom Garden, Charlie Wilson, Liza Wilson,
Bruce Franzen, Darlyne Franzen, Scott Dresler, Dorothy Jesser,
Andrew Cook, Michael Brands

I. OPENING OF MEETING

Vice-Chair Alessi opened the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

II. MINUTES

The minutes of April 15, 2015 were approved as submitted.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. Padlipchak - Wetland

Mr. Padlipchak, Iverson Way, in West Woodstock, was present to arrange a time for a site visit to his property. The owner had completed excavated within the wetland buffer of a pond. After discussion, the CC agreed to visit the site on Friday May 22, 2015 at 4:00 pm. Those who wish to car pool will meet in front of the town hall just before 4:00 pm. The Town Planner will create and send a map of the site with directions to CC members.

B. Taftsville Solar Farm

Mr. Garden, Triland Partners - solar farm developer, presented a recently completed wetlands delineation to the CC. A 45 day notice required by the Public Service Board's review process was sent April 27, 2015. Mr. Garden proposes a 500 kw solar farm to be placed in an open mowed field just west of Taftsville and south of Route 4.

Gilman and Briggs is the wetland company hired to do the delineation. The State wetland specialist, Rebecca Chalmers, has not yet seen the new delineation.

Mr. Garden's map was compared to the Planning and Zoning Office's Critical Areas Map which shows the Class III wetlands covering the entire north west quadrant of the

property. The Town's map was based on infra-red photographs that showed wetland vegetation. The delineation verified the wetlands do not actually cover the entire quadrant but are more centered on the west upper half of the property. The delineation is considered much more accurate than the infra-photograph process.

Mr. Garden noted the delineation would require a redesign of the solar panel site plan as the panels and support structures would require a 50' setback from the wetland.

Mr. Garden noted the delineated wetland report would be submitted to the Public Service Board but is not required to be sent to the Town.

The Town Planner confirmed that a Town permit is not required for the proposed solar farm as per State law, alternative energy devices are exempt from local review procedures. The Public Service Board has full control of the permit process. The Conservation Commission is tasked to review and maintain wetland records. Therefore, the CC is very interested in the delineated wetland information.

To delineate a wetland, an expert exams site vegetation and insects, and performs soil tests.

Mr. Garden stated he would not build in the wetlands.

A number of Taftsville residents were present and reviewed Mr. Garden's wetland maps.

Mr. Garden noted the map had an error on it and he preferred not to leave the map with the CC. Once the map is corrected, a copy will be sent to the Planning and Zoning Office.

C. River Corridor

A large map of the Town and a smaller map for the Village were shown to the CC. The maps show the State's proposed river corridor area in a yellow cross hatch pattern. The corridor includes the areas currently regulated under the FEMA flood hazard and the 50' and 100' stream / river buffers overlay zones.

After Tropical Storm Irene, State government officials started rethinking the physical characteristics of rivers and streams. Tropical Storm Irene exceeded both the 100 year and 500 year FEMA flood limits in many communities. Streams and rivers are live water bodies that ebb and flow creating the potential to meander over time. This meander potential is what the State hopes to capture in its mapping of the river corridor.

The FEMA flood maps show the floodway - the force/current of the water, and the 100 and 500 year floodplains - where the water essentially is in storage waiting for the river/stream's force to subside. These storage areas tend to be larger than the FEMA maps show and are now mapped as the river corridor program.

To encourage adoption of the river corridor concept, the State is offering additional money to municipalities that fund FEMA flood recovery efforts. Normally FEMA covers 75% of a municipalities' costs. Woodstock has adopted regulations governing FEMA Flood Hazard zones, wetlands, riparian buffers and stormwater potential. By doing so the Town receives an additional 12.5% on top of the 75% FEMA refund. With adoption of the river corridor concept, this amount would increase to 17.5% . With a multi-million dollar incident, the 5% increase can be quite substantial.

The State is still working on a set of model regulations that would govern what one is allowed to do in the river corridor overlay zone. The Town Planner will forward a draft to the CC for review purposes. The Town Zoning Regulations are being rewritten this year and the river corridor could be an additional section. Its assume the proposed regulations would be similar to those that regulate flood plains.

A quick review of the Village map showed the map to have errors. Properties located on the east side of High Street have contour lines that goes straight up the steep hill sides. It is highly unlikely this area would ever be flooded. Due to the obvious error, the Planning Commission and the Conservation Commissions have been asked to review the maps for accuracy before adoption of the maps becomes official.

The Town Planner will send the ANR website address that contains the proposed river corridor maps to the CC.

D. Vernal Pool Workshop Review

The CC reviewed the vernal pool workshop presented by Steve Faccio of the Vermont Eco on May 7, 2015. The workshop instructed CC members how to identify vernal pools. Two vernal pools were visited both located just off of Blankey Cottage Road. located in Wilder, VT.

The presence of salamander eggs is the most determining and strongest identifier. Fresh water clams and fairy shrimp were other noted vernal pool inhabitants. Vernal pools have no year-around water source, there is no water flow through them. The pools depend on small shallow depressions where enough but not too much snow, when melted, creates the appropriate amount of water. The pools are generally only full of water in the spring and tend to dry out as the summer progresses, hence the name - vernal.

Mr. Faccio sent the Town Planner a list of three books, recommended for vernal pool identification and information. The books will be ordered and available from the Planning and Zoning Office's library.

A map of the center's identified but not verified 25 vernal pool sites was also sent by Mr. Faccio. The map will be added to the Planning and Zoning Office GIS system and could be adopted into the current Critical Areas map. The Town Zoning Regulations would require amendment to note a requirement that the property owner would be responsible

for verifying the actual presence of the vernal pools.

Mr. Peterson started a discussion on the potential for reconstructing or creating a vernal pool. Understanding the various components of the vernal pools would be key to reestablishing the pools.

E. Riparian Buffer /Wetland Items

The Town Planner noted there are three applications expected for the June CC meeting. One would be work completed in a wetland buffer zone and the other two would be stone terraces built within a riparian buffer zone.

F. Other

Mr. Alessi discussed work accomplished by Sustainable Woodstock in the East End River Park located on land owned by the Village. Two weeks ago, six members continued their work on removing invasive plants. The area had been cleared a year ago, now with spring's arrival the invasive plants are trying to reestablish themselves.

A general work session is scheduled for May 30. Activities would take place at the East End River Park. This work would include general maintenance and a discussion of potential development in the area. On the neighboring Alsup property, a coffee shop/restaurant in the old NAPA shop and a coffee roaster in the barn are proposed but have not yet received permits.

Mr. Alessi discussed bicycling in Woodstock. There is tremendous potential for cycling (road bikes) in Woodstock and there are currently many active players. Mr. Alessi would like to gather all interested persons in one room. Peter Vollers conducts bicycle races and coaches a race team. Charlie Kimball is an active cyclist and is head of the local Economic Development Committee. The Woodstock Sports shop sells, rents and services bicycles. The Recreation Center, the Ottauquechee Health Center, and the schools should be invited as well. Rita Seto, TRORC transportation planner, should be contacted. Mr. Alessi will work with the Town Planner and Ms. Seto to ramp things up.

V. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for June 17, 2015.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Submitted by:

Michael Brands, AICP
Town Planner