

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
DRAFT MINUTES  
March 15, 2017**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Byron Quinn, Al Alessi, Cyndy Kozara, Bo Gibbs  
**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Lea Kachadorian, Lynn Peterson, Bethany Powers  
**OTHERS PRESENT:** Pete Fellows, Sally Miller, Lowell Gray, Michael Brands

**I. OPENING OF MEETING**

Chair Quinn opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

**II. MINUTES**

The January 18, 2017 minutes were approved as submitted.

**III. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Alfonse Sorrentino**

Mr. Sorrentino, a 30 year resident at 13 River Street, asked to have an informal discussion with the CC. A site map of a proposed home on the undeveloped lot behind his home was reviewed. The lot was created in 1994.

Also in 1994, a building envelope was created as relief from a 50' wetland buffer. A vernal pool is located just north of the lot in question on forested land owned by the Town of Woodstock. The request included an underground drainage system and the ability to fill in a swale. John Bruno, engineer, submitted the request which includes numerous maps and other documentation to the State and the municipality.

At the time, the request was reviewed and affirmed by the CC and Village Zoning Board.

A June 28, 1995 Conditional Use Determination letter from the Department of Environmental Conservation was read which established the building envelope and approved the proposed drainage system.

The CC did recognize that the permit was granted in 1995 when the buffer area was 50'. It was noted that the current wetland buffer is now 100'.

The entire lot has been an undeveloped mowed lawn for numerous decades.

Mr. Sorrentino is asking to change the building envelope as he would be using less area than allowed per the 1995 agreement. The current design has a small portion (a single story 20' x 18' sun room) of the home drawn outside of the approved envelope. A 28' x 36' area located within the building envelope would not be built on and would be kept as a lawn. Mr. Sorrentino would like trade the 360 sf built area for the 1008 sf unbuilt area.

After discussion, the CC agreed there should be no adverse affect in adjusting the building envelope in accord with Mr. Sorrentino's 2017 site map as discussed above.

**B. BioFinder/Vermont Atlas Workshop - Pete Fellows**

Mr. Fellows, TRORC Planner and GIS Specialist, presented a hands-on workshop for both the BioFinder and Vermont Atlas programs. Both programs were developed by the State and are available at the Agency of Natural Resources website.

Two members of the Planning Commission joined the discussion, Chair Sally Miller and Lowell Gray.

In the ensuing months, numerous in-person workshops will be conducted throughout the State. A list is included in the handouts. A webinar will be presented on Thursday March 16, 2017 from 1:00 -2:00 pm. The link will be emailed before the start of the event.

Mr. Fellows noted a strong incentive for the BioFinder program was to create inter-connected links between the various eco regions. A large map of the Northeastern US and Southeastern Canada was shown to note the various eco regions and how they might connect. As climate change occurs, wildlife will be migrating to more appropriate eco regions. With planning regulation and other incentives one can maintain migration corridors that would maintain and facilitate this migration.

Mr. Fellows then showed a map of New England and New York State showing potential migration routes. Vermont is a major crossroads for wildlife migration throughout NE and NY. This is due to the low development / lesser population aspect and the large number of protected forests located within the State.

A third map showed the high priority eco regions and potential migration routes of the Upper Valley. This map demonstrates the importance of Woodstock as a major hub for the wildlife corridors in connecting the many parts of the State.

A Federal agency is working with the North Atlantic Cooperative to improve and maintain corridors within the US and Canada. A visit to their website was encouraged.

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department generated the BioFinder maps. The maps include recognized wildlife blocks, ranging from black bear to salamanders. The Vermont Eco Center located in Wilder has been a major source of information.

A BioFinder 2.0 is the improved version, which includes updated information and more detailed reports.

A major State migration path is through Woodstock from Southern Vermont through Groton and Thetford as wildlife works it way north to the Northeast Kingdom.

Mr. Fellows zoomed into the 4 corners area formed by the intersection of Plymouth, Reading, Bridgewater, and Woodstock. Both State Forests and parcel information were shown. The area has been determined by the State to be a high priority area for corridor protection. The CC has been discussing this potential over the course of the year.

Mr. Fellows encouraged the CC to read the ANR Conservation report which sets the goals for the BioFinder mapping program.

The BioFinder program was created to be used on any digital device even as small as a cell phone. Mr. Alessi confirmed, noting he is able to follow the presentation via his cell phone.

Mr. Fellows did a quick briefing of the basic mapping layers. The first step is to go to “quick tools” and zoom into “town”, select Woodstock. The layers are shown in the left side of the screen. Various categories can be opened and downloaded as one wishes.

The program is very comprehensive. As an example, clicking the info tool over an individual vernal pool brings up tons of information. A full report as to who discovered the pool, what characteristics it shares, etc. were available. The info tool works on all the various layers, creating a wealth of information for the viewer.

Mr. Fellows than went to the related ANR Vermont Atlas mapping program. This website contains an incredible amount of State information, ranging from Act 250 permits to siting and size of individual culverts on a town road. The amount of information can be overwhelming.

Each website has a tutorial to help one navigate the site.

The State is offering numerous free courses on both the BioFinder and Vermont Atlas. The March 16 webinar will be made into a downloadable digital recording for later viewing.

Mr. Fellows was thanked for a thorough and informative presentation.

### **C. High Meadows Fund**

Mr. Fellows briefly discussed the High Meadows Fund grant that will allow an in depth study of the Ottauquechee River basin. A letter had been sent around earlier this year. The study includes the Kedron Brook as a major tributary. The study will be helpful in

the understanding of and preparation for another Tropical Storm Irene type event. The Ottauquechee River basin has not been studied as well as the White River basin.

A task force is being assembled to discern costs and efforts required. Should any Woodstock residents desire to participate, please contact either the Town Planner or the TRORC for additional information.

A kick-off event is scheduled for March 24 & 25. These are full day sessions set for Friday and Saturday. Contact the Town Planner should you desire attending.

**V. OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. Alessi noted that Sustainable Woodstock is sponsoring a brainstorming session on the proposed East End park on Wednesday March 29<sup>th</sup>. In the fall of this year, the Village snow dump will be relocated to the a site at the northern end of Maxham Meadows. This will open the area along the river for the East End park. Numerous plantings and minor landscaping have already occurred. The group is looking to establish goals and priorities for the river park. The event starts at 6:00 pm in the Town Hall conference room. Pizza and beverages will be supplied.

On Monday, March 20<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 pm, the Economic Development Commission will review the river loop walk/bike plan for the Maxham Meadow area. In the early 1990s a plan was created to establish paths along the Ottauquechee River and the old rail road bed. A large map of the proposal hangs on the back wall of the Planning & Zoning Office. The owners of the land have become more supportive of outdoor recreation opportunities.

Chair Quinn, showed the CC a four page article in the Northern Woodlands magazine. The article shows how towns can conserve town forests by creating uses on said land. An example from the Town of Windsor shows the establishment of a mountain bike trail system. The current Woodstock town forest is located in South Woodstock between Long Hill Road and Noah Wood Road. It is used in the winter for a maple syrup operation and has numerous well established horse trails. The Town Planner will scan and send the article for future discussion at the April CC meeting.

**VI. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is scheduled for April 19, 2017.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 pm.

Submitted by,

Michael Brands, AICP  
Town Planner