

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
DRAFT MINUTES
May 18, 2016**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Al Alessi, Bethany Powers, Cyndy Kozara, Lynn Peterson, Lina Hristova, Byron Quinn
MEMBERS ABSENT: Lea Kachadorian
OTHERS PRESENT: Michael Brands

I. OPENING OF MEETING

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

II. MINUTES

The minutes of April 20, 2016 were approved as submitted.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. Town Zoning Rewrite - Flood Resiliency Chapter

The Town Planner reviewed the Flood Resiliency Chapter with the CC. A copy of the Town Plan and the proposed chapter were distributed. If a plan is adopted after July 1, 2015 a Flood Resiliency chapter is required. The previous plan was adopted in 2014.

The types of floods were described including inundation and flash flooding. The various causes of flooding are listed. The chapter includes a brief history of the three major floods in Woodstock: 1937, 1973 and 2011. The FEMA Flood Hazard regulations, as written in the Town Zoning Regulations, were mentioned. The State's River Corridor program was reviewed. A State model river corridor regulation is being rewritten for adoption within the Town and Village Zoning Regulations. The Commission discussed the National Flood Insurance Program which requires flood insurance for development within the flood zones. The end of the chapter includes an Action Program stating goals, objectives and actions for the future.

The Planning Commission will hold a Public Hearing for adoption of the 2016 Town Plan on June 9, 2016 at 7:30 pm. Should the CC have any comments or edits, they can either attend the hearing or contact the Town Planner.

B. Four Corner Habitat

An updated map of the four corners: Woodstock, Bridgewater, Reading and Plymouth area was shown to the CC. In addition to the elements contained in the April map, parcel information is provided. Woodstock and Plymouth, judging by the smaller parcel sizes, appear to have more development than either Bridgewater or Reading. The prominence of the large parcel State lands, mostly the Coolidge Forest areas, shows promise for the establishment of a wildlife corridor.

The idea of establishing a wildlife corridor among the four towns has been around for at least a decade. Fortunately, the area is mostly unreachable by public road and has not been developed to any extent.

The creation of a protected corridor can be accomplished with either voluntary land easements or involuntary regulations. Woodstock has a 27 acre Forestry zone. This zone could be expanded in Woodstock portions to preclude additional development within the area. Placing easements on a property would work in towns without zoning or those that don't wish to have a more restrictive set of regulations.

A key question is how wide does an easement have to be? Once this number is determined, corridor areas can be drawn on the map. A corridor needs to be logically placed so wildlife will use it.

The four towns need to work on this together. A positive political outlook will be necessary.

The Town Planner will continue to work with Pete Fellows, valuable both as a TRORC staff person and a resident of Plymouth. A good first step would be to contact the Mecawee Pond Association.. The Mecawee Association owns a large parcel of land with numerous members. Wildlife management should line up well with their goals as a fishing and hunting organization.

Mr. Peterson noted he is meeting with Vermont Coverts this weekend to do a personal property assessment. He felt he could start a conversation with them to help move this forward. The CC agreed that if Vermont Coverts is interested, they should come and meet with the CC.

The Town Planner stated that a process like this will take time and patience for all the parts to fall in line.

C. Upcoming Applications

1. Village Snow Dump Update

At the April meeting, it was noted that the State Agency of Natural Resources has approved a wetland permit for the proposed Village snow dump. The Town Planner showed the CC two maps, 2015 and 2016, which point out the changes that were required due to the presence of the side hill seep wetland. Instead of entering from the east portion of the lot, the Village will use the west buffer area for the snow dump. Trucks would enter from the southernmost point.

On May 26, 2016, the Village will be presenting a request for a 2 acre lot subdivision from the Woodstock Resort Corporations 72 acre lot. The next step would be for a conditional use and wetland review by the CC and the TDRB. The Town Planner expects this to be filed for the June meeting.

2. John Evans

The Town Planner showed the CC a map and photographs of the excavation work done within a wetland area located at the Class III to Class IV transition point of Grassy Lane. An 1,100 foot long driveway extension was built to prevent vehicles from entering the owner's driveway. The original driveway is located at the beginning of an impassable section of Grassy Lane. Vehicle drivers apparently didn't realize this is the end of the town road and continued another +500' to the owner's home before turning around.

The error was caused when a property manager advised the excavation contractor that a permit was not required.

A permit is required from both the Town and the State. The driveway passes through a Class II wetlands which is under State control. There are numerous Class III wetlands present in the area as well. It appears the entire driveway is within the 100' wetland buffer. A portion of the driveway crosses through the wetland. An engineer has been hired to resolve the issue. An application is expected soon.

3. Ladybug LLC

The Town Planner showed the CC a map of the excavation work within the riparian buffer area at the junction of Noah Wood and Darling Roads. Ms. Hristova showed the CC photographs of the work that was done by the owner. An engineer has been hired to address the issue. An application is about to be filed for a June review. The intent is to grade, smooth over and grass the additional soil that was added within the 50' buffer zone. The area in question is already a lawn and no riparian vegetation would be removed. The owner proposes work on the south lot, across Noah Wood Road, to smooth over and grass the excavated +/-10' valley that had been dug out last November. It would take a large amount of fill to bring the land back to its original form.

D. Maggi Wetland Application Update

There is no new information. The application, at the owner's request had been continued to the May 24th TDRB meeting. The land is also actively being marketed. An engineer is expected to attend the hearing. The mitigation process would be explained. This includes a rain garden and re-engineered stormwater flow among other elements.

E. Goals for 2016

The Town Planner asked the CC if they had any additional goals they wished work on this year. The CC responded the 4 Corners Habitat Corridor should keep them fairly busy.

Energy issues were mentioned. The Town Planner suggested the Sustainable Woodstock Energy Committee should be invited for a generic discussion on energy matters. Solar siting issues was a suggested topic.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Sustainable Woodstock Events

Chair Alessi informed the CC that an East End Park cleanup is schedule for this weekend on Saturday May 21. On Thursday evening, starting at 5:00 p.m. a green drink discussion is being sponsored by Sustainable Woodstock to be held at the Worthy Kitchen.

B. Riparian Buffer

Ms. Powers spoke to a Woodstock Union High School teacher about the planting of willow trees. The trees have been planted within the school's riparian buffer along the Ottauquechee River. The main teacher in charge of the project is Mr. Hiers, horticulture instructor. The school closes in two and half weeks, therefore potential discussions with the school will have to wait until next fall. The CC suggested the students be invited to a CC meeting to discuss their work and possible future projects. This could occur next fall when school is back in session.

V. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for June 21, 2016.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Submitted by:

Michael Brands, AICP
Town Planner