

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
DRAFT MINUTES
January 18, 2017**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Byron Quinn, Al Alessi, Cyndy Kozara, Lynn Peterson, Bethany Powers, Bo Gibbs
MEMBERS ABSENT: Lea Kachadorian
OTHERS PRESENT: Gerry Hawkes, Michael Brands

I. OPENING OF MEETING

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

II. MINUTES

After a lengthy discussion, the December 14, 2016 minutes were approved as follows.

The proposed conditions as written in the minutes for the WRC application were amended. The conditions were changed to: 1) change condition #3 to condition #1 - concerning the amphibian protection area, 2) include the Quarry Loop Trail in condition #1, and 3) add that a biologist is required to set the time of the breeding and migration period on an annual basis and that this information is to be filed with the P&Z Office.

The Town Planner noted the CC recommendations as stated in the minutes are advisory. The TDRB would establish the final formal conditions during the deliberative session of the potential permit.

III. BUSINESS

A. Invasive Plant Removal - Gerry Hawkes

Local forester and inventor, Gerry Hawkes, discussed removal of invasive plants. A short video presentation was made. Mr. Hawkes has a strong preference for non-chemical solutions to control invasive plants. The use of chemicals almost always goes beyond the intended target, killing off adjacent vegetation. It also makes soil less able to support plant growth when one goes to replant a formerly infected area.

Mr. Hawkes uses a mechanical approach. He has designed shredding and pulling devices that can be attached to a tractor. Shredding invasive plants works well, especially where the intent is an open mowed meadow. If an area is not to be mowed, it is very important to remove the root structures. Invasive plants are tenacious and require constant attention.

Mr. Hawkes has also developed a propane powered flame thrower to burn off invasives where tractor access is too difficult or not feasible.

Mr. Hawkes methods work mainly on woody stemmed plants such as wild buckthorn, autumn olive and multiflora rose. Invasives such as chevril are much more difficult to control.

A negative of mechanical removal is the wear and tear on equipment. Due to the excessive vibrations generated by the devices, frequent repairs and replacement are required.

Japanese knotweed is a very difficult plant to eradicate due to its root system. Torching the plants works well to remove the bulk of the plant. However, by not removing the root system, the plants will grow right back. Japanese knotweed is most abundant near water sources such as rivers and streams. Mechanical removal of roots is very complicated due to terrain access issues. Another major problem is the strong regenerative capability of small pieces of roots which can easily float down stream infecting more shoreline land. Mr. Hawkes is still working on a viable solution.

Mr. Hawkes and Mike Bald, invasive plant specialist, work together on many projects. Mr. Bald takes a more labor intensive hands-on approach to invasive plant removal. Both agree chemical solutions are non-starters.

Due to technical difficulties, Mr. Hawkes video presentations did not work as well as intended. Additional videos are available at Mr. Hawkes website (www.forest-savers.com).

B. Potential Vernal Pool Map

The Town Planner reviewed a map of Woodstock showing 26 potential vernal pool sites. The map was compiled by the Vermont Eco Center Studies. The map notes four categories and the number of pools per category: High (3), Medium-High (7), Medium (4) and Unknown (11). A letter from Steve Faccio, VECS biologist stated the probabilities that a potential site is an actual vernal pool. The High or MH rankings have a 75% chance. The Medium ranking has a 52% chance. The unknown sites were mapped by Arrowwood Associates, and at that time were not given a confidence ranking.

The PC is discussing inclusion of these sites within the Critical Areas map. The potential pools would be shown as unverified sites. The regulations would require a review for any development within the buffer areas. However, a review would not be necessary whereby a wetland delineator or the CC issued a report indicating the site is not a vernal pool. The proposed regulations would allow a case-by-case review when and if development occurs at these sites. The majority of the potential vernal pools are located at remote sites where development is unlikely to occur.

After a lengthy discussion of the issue, the CC unanimously agreed to recommend that the potential vernal pool sites as presented by VECS be included on the Town's Critical Areas map. The Town Planner will pass this on to the PC.

C. Town Zoning Update

The Planning Commission is working its way through a proposed list of changes to the Town Zoning Regulations. The PC is finalizing potential map changes such as the previously discussed vernal pool additions to the Critical Areas map. The next PC meeting is scheduled for February 1, 2017. Once the PC finishes the Town Zoning Regulation rewrite process, work will start immediately on the Village Zoning Regulation rewrite process. An important component of the Village regulations is the riparian buffer. In the Village properties are smaller and buildings are denser. A side issue is the number of existing buildings already placed within the buffers.

D. Natural Resources Atlas

Pete Fellows, TRORC, will present a workshop on the ANR Natural Resources Atlas in February. This would include the BioFinder website as well. The CC was encouraged to bring laptops to the meeting to enable hands-on learning. The Planning Commission will also be invited.

V. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for February 15, 2017.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 pm.

Submitted by,

Michael Brands, AICP
Town Planner