

CONSERVATION COMMISSION
DRAFT NOTES
May 17, 2017

MEMBERS PRESENT: Byron Quinn, Bo Gibbs, Bethany Powers
MEMBERS ABSENT: Lea Kachadorian, Al Alessi, Lynn Peterson, Cyndy Kozara
OTHERS PRESENT: Seth Westbrook, Matt Stout, Jordana Jusidman, Sonya Stover,
Michael Brands

I. OPENING OF MEETING

Chair Quinn started the meeting at 7:00 pm, there was no quorum.

II. MINUTES

Approval of the March 15, 2017 minutes was continued.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. Woodstock Area Mountain Bike Association (WAMBA)

Seth Westbrook, WAMBA president and Pomfret school board member, started a pre-submittal discussion of an application. A brief description of WAMBA, the year old non-profit group dedicated to mountain biking, was given. WAMBA was involved in the recent permit granted to the Woodstock Resort Corporation for an extended trail network in the Mt. Peg area.

The group has been working with mountain bike trails on the Woodstock Aqueduct Company's 375 acre reservoir land located between Cox District Road and Grassy Lane. Some of the WAC trails have been in existence for +25 years. WAMBA would like make trail improvements and make the trails more open to the public. WAMBA also polices the use of trails. For example, when trails are too muddy, an alert is sent around. These have been very effective in preventing abuse of the trail system.

Matt Stout, WAMBA co-founder and Cox District Road resident, addressed the CC. The group is a non-profit with over 50 members with a 140 email base. Their intent is to attract newer riders and introduce the sport to the Woodstock area. The trails are multi-use, runners also use them. Recently a \$5000 EDC grant was approved by the Selectboard. The money would be used mainly for materials to improve existing trails. The group also wishes to place signs throughout the trail system to help people navigate the area. Board walks and wooden bridges would be added where necessary. Board walks are generally a 24" wide support system built on 2" x 6" beams with boards across

to traverse especially wet areas. In the near future, the group would like to add three miles of single track trails.

The trails run between the Vondell Reservoir, Gaebert Road and Grassy Lane. The roads are Class IV and closed to traffic in the mud season. VAST has snow mobile trails running along the roads. Numerous country skiers also use the trails and roads in the winter. Hikers and dog walkers are common at all times of the year.

A trail is proposed to run within a vernal pool buffer. A single track trail currently runs 70' down hill from the vernal pool. A proposed trail would be located 400' north of the vernal pool.

Eric Wegner, president of the Woodstock Aqueduct Company (WAC), spoke to the CC as owner of the property. Mr. Wegner shared concerns with impacts to vernal pools and erosion into the pond. WAC is very careful in its stewardship of the property, restricting logging to the winter months to prevent unwanted damage. He has a very good working relationship with WAMBA. They walk the trails frequently and whenever a problem comes up, WAMBA resolves it immediately. He, as property owner, is very happy to have the additional eyes and the presence of WAMBA as it tends to curb negative behavior. The area is kept very clean with no trash. Previous to the 1980s, the isolated spot was frequented by partiers from the nearby high school. Since then the Class IV road has been kept closed until after high school graduation.

WAC welcomes community uses and has done so for many years. The school uses it as an outdoor class room and tree nursery. The scouts camp on site. It is a favorite spot for local fishermen/women. Many locals learned to fish here.

COVERTS has worked to enhance the property for deer and wildlife with oak tree plantings and apple tree maintenance. The site is a community resource and should be used as such. The Audubon Society has been invited to use the 360 acre property as well for birding events.

Mr. Wegner is very supportive of the proposed bike use. WAMBA has been excellent stewards. It is better to have kids on bikes than on couches.

Sonya Stover, Selectboard member, explained the EDC grant. The intent of the grant is for place board walks and other necessary infrastructure. The Selectboard supported the grant as mountain biking is considered a great activity to encourage for more full time residents, especially with families with children.

WAMBA questioned why a permit is necessary. A mountain bike's impact on the land is negligible, just a tire footprint. After a year of non-use, the appearance of a trail disappears.

The Town Planner noted that any impact on a riparian, wetland or vernal pool buffer requires a conditional use review with an advisory recommendation from the CC. On the WAC property, there are both vernal pool and wetland buffers. They are also in proximity enough to create vernal pool wetland clusters whereby a 100' amphibian corridor is required.

In addition to Conservation District buffer impacts, parking and traffic flow are major concerns of group events such as those proposed. The impact on neighbors is always a major concern for permit review. The use is considered a quasi-public use and as such requires a conditional use review. The Town Planner read the Land Development definition as stated in the Town Zoning Regulations. The definition requires a permit for any change in use or alteration of land. The regulations are in place to protect both home owners and wildlife.

B. Discussion of Creative Community

Chair Quinn asked to continue this discussion to the next meeting when a full board is able to be present.

C. Town Zoning Rewrite Update

The Town Planner noted that the Planning Commission was unable to hold a public hearing on May 3, 2017 due to lack of quorum. The hearing was continued to June 7, 2017.

D. Vernal Pool Verification (WUHS)

The Town Planner noted that Vanessa Cramer, a teacher at Woodstock Union High School asked for a list of property owners to contact in order to have her biology class do vernal pool verification. Steve Faccio, Vermont Eco Center, shared a map of unconfirmed vernal pool sites with Ms. Cramer. The class hopes to make this a class project and may report back to the CC in the fall with the results.

E. Vernal Pool Workshop

On Tuesday May 23, 2017 at 2:00 pm, a vernal pool workshop will be conducted by Steve Faccio at the Blankey Cottage Road site. The proposed Zoning Regulations will require that the CC review and evaluate unconfirmed vernal pools which are delineated on the Critical Areas Zoning Map.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Planning is applying for a grant via High Meadows Fund and asked for a recommendation letter from the CC. The funds would be used to study the behavior of the Ottauquechee River and to prepare for future flooding events. After discussion, the CC agreed to have Chair Byron sign Symington letter supporting the TRORC proposal.

VI. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for June 21, 2017.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Submitted by,

Michael Brands, AICP
Town Planner