

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MINUTES
December 20, 2017**

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

I. OPENING OF MEETING

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

II. MINUTES

The November 15, 2017 minutes were approved as submitted.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. High Meadows Grant - Michael Storace, TRORC

Mr. Storace, TRORC Planner, gave a brief presentation on the recently awarded High Meadows grant.

The 18-month grant revolves around watershed resiliency events, in this case, the Ottawaquechee River watershed. Other towns located along the watershed are also involved. Just three of these towns have Conservation Commissions - Woodstock, Hartford and Hartland. The Town of Killington where the headwaters of the river are located is outside of the TRORC district. Bridgewater and Plymouth both have Planning Commissions.

The County Extension Service has a stream/flood table which is very effective in demonstrating river movement and potential flood situations. Windsor County Extension Service's agent, Larry Kasden, has been in charge of the table. The table has been used in many of the local schools.

The intent of the grant is to educate residents, landowners and students of the importance of maintaining a healthy river system. A major key to this is riparian buffer management. Woodstock's Zoning Regulations require a 100' buffer along the Kedron Brook and the Ottawaquechee River and 50' from the stream banks of other water bodies.

A riparian buffer breakfast was a suggested activity. An early morning breakfast would

be supplied with an educational presentation on the need of riparian buffers. This would be followed by a post breakfast planting session whereby donated riparian vegetation would be planted along the river bank.

A magazine-formatted document, "Living in Harmony with Streams" was distributed to the CC. These would also be distributed to participating members of the various planned events.

The CC noted that education of landowners could have prevented two riparian violations along the Ottauquechee River that occurred earlier this year. The education of realtors and excavation companies should also be required as these two entities need to be aware of riparian regulations.

Mr. Storace has planned an information session for the Woodstock Rotary to take place in March 2018. It was noted many realtors are members.

Working with the area schools is another important part of the project. Schools have been very receptive to the stream table. In the case of Woodstock Union High and Middle Schools, the river is the south boundary of the 45-acre campus. This creates an easy teaching session. A number of WUHS/MS biology teachers have committed to working with the program.

The Village-owned East End park is another great opportunity for community involvement. The area will be free of the Town's snow dump site for the first time in more than 30 years. This will be a cause for celebration as the land gets converted to a park. The site already has rain gardens in place. These are used for stormwater control. Invasive plants are being moved and the riparian buffer is being restored. Mr. Storace will contact Sustainable Woodstock for additional information.

A nutrient management plan is being developed along the Kedron Brook. The brook is known to have a high e-coli count which is apparently due to the numerous horse operations located along the brook. Although testing of the brook has been ongoing for many years, a more stringent test is being conducted by the County Extension Service via Sue Greenhall. The results should be available soon. An Americorp Volunteer is working with TRORC on this.

The North Branch of the Ottauquechee River has been tested and shows to be very clean. The North Branch connects to the river from the north side of Route 4 just west of Long Trail Brewery. The area along the branch is lightly populated and heavily wooded north of Bridgewater Center.

Questions were asked about the Hale Hollow Brook from Plymouth Notch and Broad Brook from the Coolidge State Forest which both flow into the Ottauquechee River. Mr. Storace did not have additional information on this section of the watershed.

On Monday, January 29, 2018 at 6:30 p.m. Marie Caduto, ANR Watershed Coordinator, will be holding a public hearing on the health of the Ottauquechee River in the Town Hall Conference Room. All CC members are encouraged to attend.

Mr. Alessi suggested using a regular CC meeting night for a pizza party slide show. Invitations can be sent out via the various media devices - both hard copy and digital.

Ms. Gibbs mentioned using the information from the White River project in West Hartford. There should be numerous photographs and other materials that would be applicable and could be easily shared.

The Town Planner asked if a session on best practices for removal of invasives within the riparian area could be held. A recent riparian permit requires that the best practice methods be used to remove Japanese Knotweed from a river bank. The owner had mowed Japanese Knotweed which leads to additional and rapid infestation further down the river.

The CC needs to obtain literature on best practices for removal all invasives. This should be made available to all landowners.

It was mentioned that Change the World Kids have done a lot of good work on the ground for various environmental endeavors. A new director, Pieter Bohlen, is now in charge of the group. The group is always looking for a new project.

Mr. Storace was thanked for his presentation and asked to keep in touch as the grant projects are formulated.

B. Road Side Invasives - Al Alessi

Mr. Alessi continued the discussion from last meeting on roadside invasive species.

The March 21st CC meeting will be devoted to educating the public on control of roadside invasives, mainly Chervil and Wild Parsnip. Control of other invasives such as Giant Hogweed, Wild Mustard, Japanese Knotweed and Barberry will also be discussed.

Mike Bald, an invasive plant specialist, will be contacted as he is considered an expert in the field. Mr. Bald has years of experience and has worked with the Town a number of times on invasive removals.

Cary Hawkes will also be invited. He made a presentation earlier this year to the CC on the mechanical removal of invasive plants.

Mr. Alessi read an email from Kevin Geiger, TRORC Planner. TRORC is willing to work with the Town on the issue.

Best practice methods will be discussed, and hopefully cataloged for future distribution.

Advertising the event needs to occur in February via both digital and hard copy media outlets. Mr. Alessi has contacted the Upper Valley News writer, who wrote a recent story of the Hartford CC's efforts.

Town Planner will talk to Rita Seto, TRORC Transportation Planner, concerning the State Highway Agency's policies on control of roadside invasives.

C. Sequestered Carbon via Forestry - Lynn Peterson

Mr. Peterson gave a brief update on the Carbon Sequestration via Forestry program he and Zach Ralph, of Sustainable Woodstock are working on.

The Vermont Nature Conservancy group has shown interest and came to Woodstock to discuss the program with Mr. Peterson and Mr. Ralph.

There are more than 300 sites in the US working on carbon sequestration via forestry.

Mr. Ralph has set up classes scheduled to start on the 3rd Saturday in January. There will be six meetings set up, all to take place at the Marsh Billings Forestry Center.

Today, it was announced China has taken the lead is going into the cap and trade of carbon. They have budgeted \$29 billion dollars toward the endeavor.

There is a small group in northwestern Vermont that is also working on the task.

Mr. Alessi asked what exactly is considered an active forestry sequestration project?

Mr. Peterson stated there are 5000 acres of the State owned Coolidge Forest right next to his property off of Curtis Hollow Road. The forest is doing a great job of carbon sequestration.

Measurement of the carbon storage is an important part of the project. What forest type or species is best for carbon capture? How much carbon is released from dead trees?

Vermont has seen a major reversal in forest coverage starting in the 1880s. It is now 85% covered in forests. This is due to the significant reduction of sheep flocks in the State following the Civil War.

Marsh Billings Rockefeller National Park is a great example of carbon sequestration. There is no old growth forest per say, but there are very old trees on the site that have been left to grow. The parks's forests were among the first to be managed. With more than a hundred years of management, the park will serve as a good test site.

IV. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for January 17, 2017.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Submitted by,

Michael Brands, AICP
Town Planner