CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MINUTES
April 18, 2018

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Byron Quinn, Al Alessi, Lynn Peterson
MEMBERS ABSENT:	Bo Gibbs, Cyndy Kozara, Bethany Powers, Lea Kachadorian
OTHERS PRESENT:	Jay Mumford, Mike Bald, Gerry Hawkes, Kevin Geiger, Ken Vanderburgh, Phil Swanson, Jim Pierce, Jack Rossi, Sandy Audsley, Justin Quinn, Erwin, Fullerton, Kerry Rosenthal, Barbara Berry, Michael Pacht, Howard Krum, Joanna Long, Betsy Rhodes, Lisa Cass, Barbara Butler, Jennifer Dembinski, Margaret Pierce, Laurie Marshall, Susanne Inglis, Michael Brands

I. OPENING OF MEETING

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

II. MINUTES

The March 21, 2018 minutes were approved as submitted.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. T-4808-18 Jay & Tara Mumford

The application is for Conditional Use and Wetland Review Approval to construct a 3000 sq. ft. pond. The property is located at 1780 Barnard Road and zoned Residential Five Acre / Conservation District Overlay.

Mr. Mumford presented the application.

The CC reviewed numerous site maps and engineering plans of proposed pond.

Willis Consulting Engineers designed the pond. Due to the wetness of the site, the engineers had the site viewed by the State Wetland Expert Rebecca Chalmers. She determined the site to be a Class III wetland. The wetlands were delineated by Gilman & Briggs Environmental. The wetland is not located on the Town's Critical Areas Inventory Map.

The wetland is considered a side hill seep. The 9,985 square foot wetland runs just east of the owner's driveway. The wetland starts about 100' from the north boundary and then runs due south 300' stopping just short of a shared private road. A culvert is in place at this point in the shared road. The bulk of the wetland is located below the proposed pond

site.

The owners propose constructing a 3000 square foot pond, +/- 90' long x 40' wide x 7' deep. The pond would be placed at the top of the wetland. The material removed to create the pond's capacity would be placed to create the "dam". The dam would run east / west the length of the pond. Overflow water would be able to exit on either end of the pond. Any overflow would be captured in the wetland area.

In discussing the size of the pond, it was noted it is very similar to the size of a typical home, 3000 square feet.

The CC reviewed the wetland regulations in Section 403 with the applicant.

After further discussion, the CC unanimously recommended approval of the application as proposed.

B. Roadside Invasives Workshop

Mr. Alessi introduced the speakers for the Roadside Invasive Workshop to the 22 attendees. The discussion is intended to revolve around the two main invasive plants that are impacting the highways and roadsides, Wild Parsnip and Wild Chervil. Both of these plants are very noticeable along the roadsides especially along Routes 12 and 106. Wild Chervil, the Queen Anne Lace look-a-like has been growing strong and increasing its coverage area for over a decade. Wild Parsnip, a tall dark green plant with large yellow flowers on top, have really accelerated their presence in the past five years. 2017 was an exceptional growth year for them.

Mr. Alessi recommended the following websites that contain additional information: wikipedia.org/wiki/Parsnip; vtinvasives.org/; and invasivespeciesinfo.gov/laws/vt.shtml.

. A number of speakers have been invited. Phil Swanson, Town Manager, and Ken Vanderburgh, Town Highway Supervisor, are both present to discuss Woodstock's efforts in removal of invasive plants from the highway right-of-way - 25' from center road line.

Mike Bald , "Got Weeds?" - choosewiselyvt@gmail.com, is widely recognized as one of the more experienced invasive plant experts in Vermont. Mr. Bald uses a hands-on approach to remove invasive plants, and literally pulls the plants out by hand.

Mr. Hawkes, Eco Systems - ghawkes@ecosystems.org, as a local forester and inventor is well aware of the invasive plant problem. He has introduced numerous mechanical methods to eliminate the invasive plants. His favorite tool is a 4 million btu flame thrower.

Kevin Gieger, Senior Planner with TRORC, has compiled a booklet on Invasive Plants entitled "Invasives in the TRORC Region". Copies were made available for distribution.

Mr. Swanson noted the road crews are scheduled to get out and cut areas of Wild Parsnip and Wild Chervil early before they seed out. The Town crews may have to mow two or more times as the plants are tenacious and have an incredible amount of seeds to shed. Another preventative is to keep mowers and tools clean in an effort to keep the seeds from spreading. Many of these plants, especially Wild Chervil have been spread by contracted private mower services. Mr. Swanson noted he and his staff are here to learn as invasives have become a growing concern throughout the Town.

Mr. Bald then spoke. He offered congratulations to the CC for holding the event and thanked all the attendees for showing up and sharing their experiences. The invasives are so prevalent that the most effective means of attacking them is to work together. He noted Massachusetts and Michigan are states that are well ahead of the curve on suppressing invasive plants. Both States actually have line items in their budgets for this.

Mr. Bald also thanked Mr. Swanson for being one of the first towns to hire him to remove invasives, over 13 years ago. A Giant Hogweed infestation was threatening the stream and lands around it that lead to the high school. After 7 years of diligent effort, the infestation was successfully removed.

Addressing joint efforts, Mr. Bald praised the work of 18 neighbors in North Pomfret for keeping their roadsides and fields free of Wild Parsnip. This is a successful on-going low budget operation.

Mr. Bald praised Mr. Hawkes in cleaning his equipment before he leaves a site. This is a very important but basic procedure to help prevent the spread of invasive plants. Seeds and plant particles get stuck in everything from the all pervasive mud to machine crevices. They need to be removed before moving to a new site.

The two invasive plants working in conjunction to kill off the forest. Black Swallow Wort is a ground cover invasive that covers the surface area not allowing other plants to take hold. Oriental Bittersweet is a tree top dwelling invasive that kills the trees off from above.

Wild Parsnip is getting worse every year. It is now known to be along roadsides all the way up to the Canadian border. The plant migrated into Randolph a few decades ago apparently from Canada with a load of Canadian hay.

Ms. Long stated Wild Parsnip has been in Pomfret since 1945 and has spread via large trucks and snow plows.

Mr. Bald noted wild and domestic Parsnip are essentially the same plant. The wild Parsnip tends to roam more and evolves earlier in the season. The plants are known to have 3 foot deep tap roots. He feels global warming is an issue as well causing the plant to start earlier and last later as the growing season is extended. Normally Wild Parsnip starts in late May and keeps flowering through October. He has seen it flower up to October 24th.

The most dangerous plants are Giant Hogsweed and Wild Parsnip, as they both contain a toxic sap that will burn the skin once exposed. Both plants are water soluble and the sap can be hosed off with water. Therefore is it important to carry containers of water when working with these plants.

Wild Chervil has a huge root system. If not allowed to flower, the roots will grow for 11 years or more. The plant is like a raspberry root, it will sprout new growth along its root structure even if mowed for years. Chervil starts early in the season before Wild Parsnip and well before native plants can get a start.

Parsnip has a single tap root and will grow to 8 feet tall. The plants will continue to grow even if the stem is removed as nutrients are stored in the tap root. Each plant can generate 15,000 seeds. The seed life is five years. Seeds continue to produce 21 days after flowering. Both Wild Parsnip and Wild Chervil can grow in the same place, whereas native plants are crowded out.

At the Pomfret School, 13,000 Wild Parsnips were pulled out in the first year of treatment. Last year, the number was down to 4,000 plants removed. It will take up to 7 years to assure a clean site, no remaining plants. With the help of the school's neighbors the spread of the infestation is being kept in check.

Mr. Bald's preferred method is to set up wooden pallets on which the pulled plants are placed to dry. The pallet allows air circulation yet keeps the plants off the ground. Even an 8' tall pile of plants will eventually dry out. Any seeds would remain in the area of the pallet. Pallets are given away free by larger stores that receive deliveries on pallets.

It is best to pull the plants early. However it is important to pull the root out with the plant. A more mature plant will allow both stem and root to be removed at the same time. Parsnip does not grow into the woods, it likes light. Wild Chervil does grow in the woods. Pulling the plants from choke point areas that will help keep the infestation from spreading. This is especially important for farm fields.

Mr. Hawkes spoke on his flame thrower technique. The flame thrower destroys the plant at the site assuring no further spread. It is also keeps one from touching the plant. A sickle bar cutter is an excellent tool as well. The sickle bar drops the plant in place and they are easy to clean. They also work well in steep slope areas.

Ms. Rhodes felt Wild Parsnip would suffer more with flame and the seeds would be eliminated immediately once burned.

Mr. Bald noted prescribed burns as an eradication method have been used in Michigan, but too much elsewhere.

Solarizing the plant is another technique, that works well. It can kill the plants down to twelve inches deep, thus destroying root systems. Solarizing is the covering an area with plastic sheets. Both clear and black plastic have been used. Within 30-60 days all plant life under the sheet is dead.

Mr. Vandeburgh asked about Wild Chervil and Wild Parsnip mixed in with one another. They appear to flower at different times, which creates the need for multiple cuttings.

Mr. Bald noted stewardship is an important piece of the puzzle. One needs to take constant care of the property, watching for invasive plants at all times. Wild Chervil is very difficult to remove once it has taken over an area. The roots are extremely long. Once an area is severely infested, the roots need to be removed. Mr. Bald demonstrated how to carefully use a garden fork to remove the roots as the entire root needs to taken out.

Wild Parsnip does not like wet areas.

Burdock serves as a decent barrier to invasives as they will not grow in a burdock patch. This works great when attempting to separate road side growth from entering a farm field.

Mowing along roadsides was discussed. Mowing the sunny side first and then coming back in two weeks to do the shady side of a road is the best method. However as a practical matter, most mowers are private contractors who want to mow both sides at once and don't have time to come back two weeks later.

Mr. Swanson stated the Town will start mowing twice a summer.

Ms. Rhodes suggested spot mowing. A specific area of known growth can be hit multiple times a season without having to mow the entire length of the road.

Mr. Alessi questioned soil type as an issue. He noted Wild Chervil is not as prevalent in New Hampshire as in Vermont. He felt it had to do with the soil which in different in the two states.

Mr. Bald stated a good source of information is the "Weeds and Why they Grow" book.

Mr. Hawkes stated a good plant to replace invasives is the Lathco Flat Pea. It grows quick and is a great cover plant. As a member of the pea family it provides additional nutrient value to the soil. The root system is known to go as deep as 60', however not in Vermont with its well known bedrock issue.

Mr. Bald added that goats are a great solution to Wild Chervil and Japanese Knotweed. Towns have purchased temporary fencing that can be moved from site to site. Goats are hired and eat their way through the invasives on a case by case basis. Another concept is to hire prisoners that could do invasive removal by hand. They would learn a skill and get outdoors.

Mr. Bald closed the meeting with one more phrase: "Get it early and take out the minor instances". Invasive plants start well ahead of native plants and need to be removed early in the process. Working the little patches is beneficial in that it keeps the plants from spreading and also is good for one's moral in enabling complete removal of the invasive even if from a small patch of infestation.

IV. OLD BUSINESS - None

V. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for May 16, 2018.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Submitted by,

Michael Brands, AICP
Town Planner