

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MINUTES
April 18, 2018**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Byron Quinn, Al Alessi, Cyndy Kozara, Lynn Peterson, Bo Gibbs,
Bethany Powers
MEMBERS ABSENT: Lea Kachadorian
OTHERS PRESENT: 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. 2018 State of Vermont Bike/Pedestrian Grants

The Town Planner discussed the upcoming Bike Pedestrian Grant Program. Applications are due by June 22 of this year. The application is very basic and TRORC will assist in filing it.

There is \$300k in State money available for bike and/or pedestrian road/trail improvements. One caveat is that it must be related to commuting more so than recreational use.

A potential project is to repaint the fog line from the Pleasant Street bridge north along Route 12, ideally to Pomfret Road. Numerous cyclists use this road, many for commuting purposes such as Mr. Alessi. The Town Planner noted the vehicle travel lane can be narrowed to 10' on low speed sections, and 11' feet on higher speed areas. The current shoulder width is very narrow along this stretch of Rt. 12, any additional width could be very helpful.

Another item is to paint "sharrows" on bike lane areas. A sharrow is a bike logo with an arrow showing motorists that this is a roadway shared between bikes and cars. They've become very common in urban areas and work well in lower speed sections of the highway.

The CC also discussed the East End bike way which was originally drafted in the early 1990s by the Town Planner. Currently there is renewed interest with the Economic

Development Committee and the majority land owner - the Woodstock Inn. The Town Planner will contact the EDC to see if there is additional momentum to move this 25 year old project forward.

The Town Planner asked members to think of various ideas that could be researched before the next meeting. Should they think of any, please send an email with the concept.

B. Scenic Viewshed Regulations?

The Planning Commission is writing an “enhanced” Energy Chapter for the Town Plan which would, once approved, allow the Town to participate in Public Service Board reviews of solar farms and other large scale alternative energy proposals. The Town Plan is required to show three categories of solar site potential: prohibited areas, affirmed areas and a middle ground of areas that may have some constraints.

The Planning Commission is considering establishing a scenic view shed review process to review areas with constraints. The hope is to use standards similar to those found in the scenic ridgeline regulations that determine the visibility of a development.

The CC was asked if they would be willing to participate in such a review as they do with the Scenic Ridgeline proposals.

There was unanimous consent to participate in a similar review process.

The size (square footage or acreage) of a facility was mentioned as a potential factor for review versus the State’s standard based on kilowatts produced.

The Town Planner noted LIDAR (a laser based mapping technology) could be used to help locate potential sites for solar farm placement. Sites need to be close to the power grid, yet somewhat invisible from a highway or road. The LIDAR technology can map with incredible detail, it was used to discover Mayan ruins in the jungles of Central America.

TRORC mapping guru, Pete Fellows, is willing to use LIDAR mapping for specific areas of the Town but is not able, due to the high cost involved, of mapping the whole town. The CC could help the process by proposing potential mapping sites where a solar farm could be placed without creating a negative impact on its neighbors.

C. Annual Chair / Vice-chair elections

Chair Quinn stated it is time to select a chair and vice-chair of the CC. This is done annually after Town Meeting Day. After discussion and without opposition, Chair Quinn and Vice-chair Alessi were reelected for an additional one year term.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Roadside Invasives Workshop Review

The CC discussed last month’s Roadside Invasive Plant Workshop. All agreed it was a success with approximately 30 participants from the region. Many participants were quite knowledgeable about the subject. The key now is to maintain the momentum generated by the event.

One suggestion was to hold an invasive insect workshop in the future. There are now three major insects invading Vermont that will cause major destruction of trees and forests. The Emerald Ash Borer was found in Thetford. The Long Horn Asian Beetle was found near Barre. The Hemlock Woolly Adelgid is known to exist in southern Vermont near the Massachusetts border.

The former State and County Forester Jon Boutin was recommended as a potential speaker on the subject. Mr. Boutin is a former resident of Woodstock.

The Town Planner distributed a USDA produced card that contains basic information on the Asian Longhorn Beetle including a life size exit hole.

Chair Quinn stated that the Garlic Mustard invasive plant is now flowering.

Invasive plants tend to emerge much earlier than native plants. Members should be on the lookout for new growth.

The Town Planner suggested creating a map showing areas of infestation. Once sites are brought to his attention, the points can be GPS'd for mapping purposes. This could start a historic study showing the spread or diminution of infestation over the years. During last month's presentation, it was noted smaller emerging areas are easier to attack versus larger areas of infestation which are already established. The mapping of the smaller areas could enable a scheduled progressive removal process. CC members were encouraged to look out for areas of infestation that could then be mapped over time.

Another goal is to replace removed species with a viable plant. Gerry Hawkes mentioned the Lathco Flatpea as a sturdy nitrogen producing plant for this purpose.

Mr. Alessi read that a carrot fly is known to attack invasive plants. However, importing alien species generally leads to a negative outcome. The imported species without a natural predator tends to take over as a mono culture.

Mr. Alessi also mentioned the different soil types between New Hampshire and Vermont with the NH soils being more acidic. There appears to be a lot less Wild Parsnip along NH roads. He will conduct an experiment this summer by treating some infested areas with vinegar to increase the soils acid content.

B. Village Zoning Update

The Planning Commission selected a 50 foot riparian buffer for all of the Village. They felt this would be more equitable and easier to enforce. The CC had suggested that properties with frontage along the Ottauquechee River and the Kedron Brook that currently have a 100' naturally vegetated riparian area should retain the full 100' buffer. Properties with development located closer than to water bodies could have a 50' riparian area.

The Town Planner explained the River Corridor regulations that he rewrote. With a conditional use review, additional development could be allowed between existing structures. However, no additional development would be allowed closer to the water body. This regulation would cover the numerous grandfathered structures within the

Village.

C. Sequestered Carbon via Forestry

Mr. Peterson gave his monthly update on the carbon sequestration program currently being held at the NPS Forest Center Building on the third Saturday of every month. The May meeting is scheduled for this Saturday, May 19 at 1:30 pm.

Mr. Peterson wrote an article for Green Energy Times on the subject. He will send it around to the membership.

On May 19, a State Forester will be conducting a talk that encourages the use of some of the large tracts of state land for carbon sequestration.

There will be 4 more sessions this year. At a later session, a Maine forester who is monitoring 12,000 acres of forest will speak. He will present the results of his research and will be open to questions and suggestions.

The last session will have a Vermont State forester detailing his experience with monitoring carbon sequestration in trees.

The key to the advancement of carbon sequestration is scientific proof that the concept produces concrete results. Once the concept is proven, investment can follow either privately or via state and local governments.

There remain many questions to be answered. Does a full tree crown hold more carbon than a tall tree with a narrow crown. This then asks; which is better natural growth or manicured growth - to create tree separation.

Which type tree is best at carbon storage, evergreen or deciduous? Then, which species of tree is better for example: birch, ash or maple?

D. High Meadows Update

There was no update as the Town Planner was unable to contact the TRORC planner in charge of the program.

V. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for June 20, 2018.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Submitted by,

Michael Brands, AICP
Town Planner