

## WESTMINSTER CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meeting, Thursday, August 29th, 2019 at 7:15 P.M. Westminster Institute

Note: The regularly scheduled August 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting was moved to Aug 29<sup>th</sup> due to commission members' schedules. The meeting will be held at Town Hall. Note: Town Hall locks may have been changed as Tatiana's key did not fit. We left a note at the door and met at the Westminster Institute in the kitchen because the building was open.

1. Call to Order : meeting called to order at 7:30 pm.

Present: Libby Mills, Steven Major, Tatiana Schreiber, Arthur Davis, Naomi Craig, Rachael Shaw

2. Adjustments to Agenda: none

3. Acceptance of Minutes: Minutes from June 20th- minutes amended and accepted. Note: please find amended minutes included at the end of these August minutes. Original 6/20/19 posted minutes cannot be changed, but these minutes include 6/20/19 minutes with changes.

4. Communications and Public Comment: none

5. Unfinished Business (Discussion / Action)

a.) Watershed grant – discuss any remaining tasks (copies of report to be made available) and comments from guests at June 20<sup>th</sup> meeting

Arthur made 25 copies of the grant report, which came out really well. He used \$127. Arthur will make 3 more copies so that the grant money will all be used (\$145). They will be distributed among ourselves, town officials at the Town Hall, the Butterfield Library, the Westminster West Library, a BFUHS science teacher and interested members of the public. Libby will leave 15 copies at the Town Hall for distribution to the Town Manager and each member of the Select board and Planning Commission, with any remainders for public use. Select board member Toby Young already has one. Stephen Major will deliver one to Sue Steiner (BFUHS Environmental Science teacher). Tatiana will bring 3 to the WW library, and 3 to the Butterfield library. The WCC will hold on to any remaining copies.

Tatiana will ask Jeff Nugent about the availability of LiDAR (LiDAR is an acronym of Light Detection and Ranging) data for the Town of Westminster. She will also ask him if he has been in touch with Jeff Littleton to obtain the underlying data for his report. Then we can ask John Broker-Campbell and Rebecca Chalmers to help us interpret and compare the maps.

Tatiana will ask David Deen re: forest hydrologists. It would be great to meet with such a person, and better understand the priorities for forest conservation in relationship to flood resilience.

b) Invasive species – non-chemical control brochure – review assigned tasks

We are thinking about creating a brochure which would describe non- chemical means to control invasive/opportunistic species. Brochure to be produced by Spring 2020.

Brochure: Arthur (Buckthorn), Tatiana (goutweed and Japanese knotweed), Stephen (multiflora roses), Libby (multiflora roses), Rachael (poison ivy and Asian bittersweet), Naomi (Japanese knotweed and Asian bittersweet). For knotweed, we would emulate the Mike Bald method (frequent manual cutting/mowing during the growing season).

Tatiana will write an introduction for this pamphlet. Arthur will collect the information, which can be edited. Everyone send their information to Arthur by Sept. 19th, include credits.

c) Town Plan recommendations: For our September meeting we will focus on the sections on flood resilience. Read and be ready to comment for September meeting.

e) Town Forest trail work

Stephen mentioned that there are access roads from the West side and East sides of town. Arthur will send out an email about a group hike in the Town Forest. We will also look for an alternative to plastic tape for marking trails.

f) beaver concerns in Westminster West – update

(See new business in 6. a.) No other beaver issues were mentioned.

6. New Business (Discussion / Action)

a) beaver deceiver installed in West West – plan educational event?

Skip Lisle has installed a professional beaver deceiver at the culvert on Wright Way just across from the Westminster West School. Naomi will ask the principal about Studio Y scheduling so that we could hold a public educational/celebratory event at the Major pavilion, hopefully involving some Westminster students. We will see whom we can invite as a speaker to explain how the deceiver works - either Skip Lisle or Patti Smith are possibilities. The students currently using Studio Y could ideally come over to learn about it. Tatiana will contact Kathy Kingston to see if she would like to be involved in planning this event.

#### 7. Other Business:

Make a request for a small budget for the Conservation Commission to be included in the Town budget. We would need to get the budget request in by November. We will put it on the October agenda and come up with budgets for several projects we are planning, i.e. educational events; invasive species brochure, etc.

Add a discussion of roadside mowing to an agenda for a future meeting.

8. Date of Next Meeting: Thursday, September 26<sup>th</sup>, 7:15 PM, Town Hall (need key!)

9. Adjournment at 9:00 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by  
Rachael Shaw, secretary.

Note: A copy of the amended minutes from the June 20, 2019 meeting is included here, as it is not possible to change the ones that have been posted to the Town's website:

#### WESTMINSTER CONSERVATION COMMISSION meeting

Thursday, June 20th, 2019 at 7:15 P.M.

Westminster West Library

Present: Tatiana Schreiber, Stephen Major, Naomi Craig, Arthur Davis (acting secretary), Libby Mills,

Invited guests: Rebecca Chalmers, John Broker-Campbell, Jeff Nugent

Note: The regularly scheduled June 27th meeting has been moved up one week due to commission members' schedules. The June 20th is being held at the Westminster West Public Library to accommodate invited guests.

1. Meeting called to order at 7:15 p.m.
2. No adjustments to the agenda.
3. Minutes from May 30, 2019 meeting accepted by unanimous consent.

#### 4. Communications and Public Comment:

Town resident Jan Ameen (not present) had asked Tatiana if the WCC has any plans regarding the Emerald Ash Borer. We don't have any plans at the moment, but are aware of the issue.

Stephen suggested that we include the Emerald Ash Borer issue in our input to the Town Plan, but as this issue is more imminent, we will plan to discuss it at an upcoming meeting. Other towns have gotten grants to work with ash borer prevention. We will discuss whether we have time/energy to look for a grant ourselves at an upcoming meeting.

#### 5. Unfinished Business (Discussion / Action)

- a) Watershed grant – discuss any remaining tasks
  - b) Invasive species – non-chemical control brochure – review assigned tasks
  - c) Town Plan recommendations – on hold for July meeting
  - d) Town Forest trail work – schedule date for walk
  - e) beaver concerns in Westminster West – update
- (all unfinished business postponed until July meeting)

#### 6. New Business (Discussion / Action)

Invited guests: Rebecca Chalmers, John Broker-Campbell and Jeff Nugent to review Moosewood flood resiliency report, help interpret maps, and advise re: next steps.

Notes from the discussion:

\*Rebecca encourages us (and others) to include LIDAR data to identify wetlands because aerial photography can miss 30-50% of wetlands. Charlie Hohn (wetlands program of State of VT) might be a good resource.

\*Jeff notes that the recommendations are pretty broad brush. He suggests looking at watersheds from the headwaters of the watershed and then where they enter developed areas. Where are wetlands and forests within this lens?

He asked about steep slopes ordinances and mentioned that we should keep our focus narrow.

Stephen asked where are these wetlands? High up or low down?

\*Rebecca noted that we don't know about all the little wetlands out in the woods and how they are affecting the system.

\*John noted that more regulation is needed to protect, and if the regulations are too vague, they won't be adhered to. We should be careful around regulatory recommendations.

\*Stephen mentioned that we already have a ridgeline protection ordinance, which has some ancillary beneficial effect for flood resilience.

\*Jeff discussed the idea that simply conserving land as it is won't necessarily make things better, but rather will prevent flooding from getting worse.

He noted that if you are making a culvert in perennial streams that are on a larger scale, then the state has to get involved and do a hydrologic study and the culvert has to be able to withstand a 100-year flood.

The Municipal roads general permit was mentioned.

\*Rebecca noted that it is important to figure out exactly where wetlands are so that this information is factored in as development pressure increases.

Stephen noted that we should decide which areas are highest priority for conservation.

\*John noted that any action like this will have some amount of detrimental impact on some landowners.

Stephen proposes that we use the FEMA maps, slopes that are above a certain grade, and elevation in order to create some set of guidelines that could delineate rules for future development.

\*Jeff discussed the Putney wetland zoning ordinance. We noted that we have a copy of this and will look at it as we discuss whether we want to propose zoning changes, development regulations, or guidelines/recommendations.

\*Rebecca says that we should look at steep slopes ordinances in other towns/states.

Regarding the maps:

\*Jeff asked if there are areas in town where there are perennial problems for road washouts or other flooding? Tatiana mentioned that this had been done at a meeting a couple of years ago (using residents' recollections), but we could do more research on this.

\*John said that there are 85 buildings in the FEMA flood hazard area. This data was from the 1970s. Tatiana asked how close to reality this mapping is?

\*Rebecca noted that NRCS data shows that VT is getting much wetter. Vermont has 4-9 more inches each year since 2014.

Stephen said that we need to decide whether we are focusing on inundation flood damage or erosion flood damage.

\*They all indicated that more data was needed, and they may be able to help collect that. Jeff N. is going to contact Jeff Littleton to ask about the data and primary resources he used to create the maps.

7. Other Business: none

8. Date of Next Meeting: July 25th, 7:15

9. Adjournment at 9:00

Edited minutes respectfully submitted by  
Rachael Shaw