

WESTMINSTER CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meeting, Thursday, Sept 26th, 2019 at 7:15 P.M.

Location: Westminster Institute North Room

Present: Tatiana Schreiber (chair), Libby Mills, Arthur Davis, Rachael Shaw (secretary)

1. Meeting called to order at 7:20 p.m.

2. New business: add in discussion of an article about the WCC's activities for the Town Report

3. Acceptance of Minutes: Minutes from August 29th

Minutes from August 29, 2018 read and approved by unanimous consent.

4. Communications and Public Comment: Tatiana received a comment from resident Peggy O'Toole with concerns about roadside mowing on her property in WW village.

5. Unfinished Business (Discussion / Action)

a.) Watershed grant – final disposition of grant, and follow-up work

Arthur will make 3 more copies. Libby will bring them to the Town Hall. Rachael will check in to see if Stephen delivered one copy to BF science teacher. Tatiana will contact Jeff Nugent and David Deen re: recommendation of forest hydrologist. Tatiana will submit final receipts for reimbursement for these expenses when Arthur had finished copying.

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

Arthur has been collecting information from members. We are still in the process of collecting information on the various species that are problematic. Arthur will work on the structure of the brochure.

We could mention that some of these species may have some beneficial habitat value for birds, mammals and pollinators.

The Brattleboro Conservation Commission Knotweed control video is available online. We watched part 3 during the meeting (1:54 minutes) and it was short and sweet.

Rather than calling them invasive species, we could perhaps call them “Opportunistic plants that you have concerns about”, or come up with another phrase that does not carry value judgments.

Naomi had mentioned wild parsnips. Rachael mentioned Autumn Olives (also an edible berry) and a type of honeysuckle. Libby mentioned bindweed.

We need to make sure that we have credits for all sources for this information. Libby will do multiflora roses.

All will get our info to Arthur by Thursday Oct 17.

c) Town Plan recommendations – discussion of flood resiliency section, decide re next section to focus on.

Add something to section (14)

A. add something about steep slopes and high value wetlands that have high value for flood storage, wetlands with juxtaposition to steep slopes, and wetlands that have low flood storage capacity but need protection to maintain their current flood resiliency value.

B. Add something about restoration of wetlands.

We will try to come up with specific language to amend this section for the next meeting.

Natural Resources section: Natural Areas, Wetlands and Fish and Wildlife (Rachael and Libby p.29-32), Agriculture and Forestlands (Tatiana, p.33-34), Energy (Stephen and Michael Daley p. 39-42), Land Use Plan (Arthur p. 46-47)

The idea is to strengthen the language, bringing it from vague to concrete. We will each type up our suggestions. The Town Plan can be found on the Town website. We also feel the plan as a whole needs to be updated with recent climate change predictions, which set a frame for town planning - we will work on suggestions for introductory material in this regard.

e) Town Forest trail work - report back from exploratory walk 9/23/19

Stephen, Tatiana and Arthur walked a small section of the Town Forest from East Putney Brook Rd (WW side). There are possible kiosk sites at log landing, Mill Brook Road, Quarry Road and Daigle Road.

There are some very steep slopes. The post-logging landscape is growing oak saplings, and some other ground covers. There are some good possibilities for trail construction. We will need some funds for kiosks and trail markers. Arthur and Stephen will work up a budget/proposal for trail marking.

Libby will ask about procedure re: sale of Town forest lands.

6. New Business (Discussion / Action)

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

School principal and Kathy Kingston both supportive of an event. Perhaps Skip Lisle and/or Patti Smith could come and explain how it works to a school/ community group. Rachael will find out the Studio Y schedule in late October and early November from Janelle Beard, studio Y teacher.

Tatiana will ask Kathy to contact Patti and Skip once we figure out some possible dates.

b) cyanobacteria (bluegreen algae possibly from too much phosphorus) warning in Westminster – follow up needed?

Rockingham CC asked Tatiana about sign at Henwoods Hill Road. VT Health Dept had asked Russ to put up the sign. The source of the elevated levels is not clear. Tatiana will call health dept for more info.

c) concern re roadside mowing – plan conversation with road crew

Perhaps we could invite Road crew to our November meeting to discuss issues that are of interest to both Road Crew and Conservation Commission. Peggy would be interested in attending.

d) projects that need funding – list for budget request to town: Town Forest trails, brochures, educational events.

e) article about WCC for the Town Report: postponed discussion until next meeting.

7. Other Business:

The Conservation Commission received a copy of “Mapping Vermont’s Natural Heritage” from the VT Dept of Fish and Wildlife. The members will take turns reading through it. Rachael will read it first and pass it along to Tatiana.

8. Date of Next Meeting: October 24th 7:15 pm, location TBA

9. Adjournment at 9 pm.

Respectfully submitted by
Rachael Shaw, secretary

