

Topsham Conservation Commission

Meeting Minutes Approved 04/03/23

Jan 10, 2023 at 5:30 pm

Topsham Town Office and via Zoom

Present: Victor Langelo, Audie Arbo, Steven Pelletier, Raija Suomela

Absent: Shana Stewart Deeds

Also in attendance: Julie Erdman, Town Planner; Mindee Goodrum, FB Environmental; Kim Mondonedo

- I. Approval of Dec 13, 2022 minutes.

Did this happen? Yes.

- II. Presentation on Nature-Based Climate Solutions for the TFM Stream Watershed 5:40 - 6:20

Mindee Goodrum with FB Environmental presented her draft story map featuring possible LID infrastructure solutions to the stormwater pollution problem in the urban impaired Topsham Fair Mall stream. She noted that chloride from winter salting is the biggest pollutant; it is toxic to plants and animals and cannot be easily filtered out. She discussed solutions to reduce stormwater runoff such as rain gardens and green roofs; and reducing the need for chloride by installing pervious pavement and heated sidewalks. All BMP's would be voluntary.

- III. Appointment of Chair and Secretary.

- A. Check in about community interest in joining the TCC
- B. Check the 2022 Action items copied to the 2023 Google Drive folder and remove any from this list that are completed

The consensus was that we should alter the commission's meeting time to accommodate Shana's schedule before voting for officers. Appointments tabled until Feb. 2023. Kim Mondonedo expressed her interest in joining the Commission. It was noted that while Conservation Commission meetings are open to the public and all are welcome to attend and comment, the Commission cannot exceed five members.

- IV. Discussion on changes to Vernal Pool SAMP program. 6:20 - 6:45?

- A. Thoughts from members of the original committee.
- B. Proposed minimum fee calculation.

Victor summarized a meeting with stakeholders in the development of the vernal pool program. The attendees were Aram Calhoun, Jim Howard, Don Spann, Angela Twitchell, Megan Leach and Victor Langelo. The general concern was why hasn't the SAMP been used? The consensus of the group was that the right development hasn't been proposed on a property with vernal pools.

It wasn't clear to the group that a minimum fee would simplify the SAMP process. The fee must be high enough to actually provide for effective mitigation, yet reasonable to the developer. Using the average per acre value of land as the basis for the fee didn't seem to work for every project. The fee would have to be based on the actual assessed value of the parcel. Which means it can't be determined until after the developer has already invested in the project, just like the formula in the ordinance. So it doesn't simplify the process.

The discussion turned to how to identify potential projects that could be used to demonstrate the value of the SAMP program. Angela was going to seek input from landowners in Topsham. Jim suggested that the Scarborough Downs development might provide some good test cases since there are plenty of pools there. Running the numbers on a potential parcel there might be very illustrative.

The outcome was that finding a good sample project might be more useful to spurring other developers to use the SAMP than any changes to the ordinance.

V. Updates 6:45-7:05pm

- A. Landscape ordinance suggestions:
- B. Review Market Basket landscape plan

Tabled until Feb 2023. Julie agreed to forward the Market Basket landscaping plan with the comments from the peer review landscape architect to the Commission and noted that the plan has been approved.

VI. Items for upcoming meetings - table

- A. NAP RFP review
- B. Head of Tide monitoring
- C. Set priorities for 2023
- D. Work with BTLT because they are also interested in Vernal Pool mapping