

## Topsham Conservation Commission (TCC)

Meeting Minutes approved 03-04-24

Monday Feb 5, 2024 at 5:30 pm

at the Topsham Town Office - meetings open to all.

Attendees: Audie Arbo, Angela Brewer, Shana Stewart Deeds, Chris Dwinal, Julie Erdman (Planning Director) and Victor Langelo. See item II for additional attendees.

I. Approve Jan 8, 2024 minutes

Victor made a motion to approve the January minutes as written that was seconded by Audie. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

II. Listening session on issues with pesticides in Topsham

The Topsham Conservation Commission (TCC) was approached by community members about considering the support of pesticide ordinance in Topsham. The TCC agreed to have a listening session regarding a pesticide ordinance and the use of pesticides in the Town. There were 16 residents present for the listening session on pesticides in Topsham, most from the Highland Green neighborhood, including: Frances P Belford, Bill Chamberlin, Anne Cole, Elizabeth Durrell, Susan Fenn, Ann Gardner, Michael Green, Nancy Harding, Laura O'Brien, Thomas O'Brien, Mel Passe, Suzanne Ritter, Barb Stainman, and Ted Stainman.

Michael Green read a statement (included at the end of these minutes) and sent a list of towns with pesticide ordinances (also listed at the end of the minutes). He is interested in the Town adopting a pesticide ordinance.

Folks from Highland Green are particularly interested in this issue now because their 5 year pesticide/herbicide application contract is due for renewal at the end of 2024.

There were folks with opinions on both sides of the issue. Some wanted more data, or pointed to data that indicated that proper, licensed application did not create a human health hazard, while others were physicians that had treated people with chemical-related impacts. Some were upset with and pointed out possible runoff into waterways or negative impacts on unintended species such as pollinators. There was also some discussion of alternatives to pesticides/herbicides such as integrated pest management (IPM).

Apparently, there had been a runoff study proposed at Highland Green, to test water running off the properties, and to test water from retention basins and culverts. Indirect measures of how many particles (total dissolved solids) were running off would be a cheaper alternative to measuring the pesticides/herbicides directly. There was not financial support for these studies.

In the end, folks commented that there would be no way to make everyone happy, and that any ordinances would need to balance private property rights, state regulations, the desire to maintain aesthetics while also maintaining human and ecological health.

TCC members listened to attendees' comments. We suggested that interested community members consider highlighting demonstration lawns (those that might use IPM, plant native plantings or

manage their properties for pollinators with reduced chemical pesticide and herbicide use), provide informational meetings/library talks, or raise funds for water quality testing. TCC is happy to advertise any such events.

III. Consideration of conservation options for Lot R11-007 and R11-008

The Brunswick Topsham Land Trust (BTLT) is reviewing Lot R11-007 and R11-008, which are for sale, for conservation value. TCC discussed these lots and their conservation value. These lots are near the Muddy River, and are rated high or medium-high in the current Natural Areas Plan. TCC discussed the possibility of development on the property, and the fact that they contain wetland habitats that may not be developable. These lots are unfragmented, provide trail connectivity, and wildlife habitat. We feel as though the property near the road farthest from the Muddy River likely has the greatest development risk.

Shana made a motion, seconded by Chris, to convey TCC support for the conservation of the property without a commitment to funds. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously. Victor will email BTLT (Margaret) and keep TCC in the loop.

IV. Finalize 2024 work plan

All TCC members should access the annual plan and make comments before the next meeting.

V. Updates

Shana will request the following updates to the webpage: a link to the climate action plan, a link to the comp plan, and a link to the natural areas plan. Also, accessing the google drive was discussed, and new TCC members have received access.

VI. Items for upcoming meetings – meetings are the first Monday at 5:30 unless otherwise noted

- A. Don't forget to check the action items list and mark items as 'done' when completed
- B. Head of Tide and Rogers Property monitoring - coordinate with BTLT - Fall
- C. Work with BTLT to identify potential Vernal Pools where the SAMP could be used
- D. Joint meeting with Brunswick Tree Committee
- E. Potential meeting with Brunswick Climate Action Plan Committee
- F. Open space materials at the next meeting
- G. Finalize Work Plan at our next meeting

A motion was made by Shana to adjourn, which was seconded by Chris. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 7:08pm. Minutes respectfully submitted by Shana Deeds, Secretary.

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**Addendum - Michael Green's Statement read during this meeting:**

"We gathered here are interested for Topsham to pass a town-wide pesticide/herbicide ordinance. We come here tonight to petition our Town Conservation Commission for support and suggestions towards this goal.

To date there are over 30 towns in Maine that have ordinances that partially or fully ban pesticide/herbicide applications. Of special concern is the protection of our water aquifer and shoreline. Topsham is geologically located in the middle of three river systems, the Androscoggin, the Cathance, and the Muddy rivers. These waters are important in that they support sport and commercial fishing,

tourism and year-round migrating wildlife. These waters are surrounded by an environment of farming, woodlands, domestic animals, human settlement, and are abundant with beneficial insects and microorganisms vital for life. All are at risk from the toxic effects of pesticides. We the people need to protect not only our living environment, but also our precious groundwater, our essential drinking water. It is not enough to wait until contamination is found, we need to take preventative action.

As an example in 2022 Brunswick, our neighbor had a 4 acre die off of clams off of Merepoint from excess fertilizer runoff and warming waters. Also, there has been contamination of PFA's in one of our town's wells for drinking water.

More than 90% of Americans have pesticides or their byproducts in their bodies. The average yearly pesticide usage in the United States is one billion pounds. Toxins such as glyphosate (Roundup) an herbicide, has been linked to cancer in humans. Systemic pesticides, such as the neonicotinoids (neonics) are widely used. Once applied these toxins, invade every part of a plant, including the pollen that attract our pollinators. It kills the bees.

Tragically on a worldwide scale, there has been a massive die off of biodiversity, with pesticides being a major offender. Most significantly this has affected our pollinators, essential to our food chain of life. There is also a high cost to human health. High exposure is likely to cause premature babies, asthma, children with autism, impaired cognitive function, Parkinson's disease, and other neuro-developmental disorders.

There has been a failure of our national and state governments to protect us, and our environment from the harm caused by these toxins. Until our government legislates for environmental and our personal protection against the continuing and widening use of toxins, it becomes incumbent for each community, its residents and leaders, to stop this dangerous toxic pollution.

A ban on the excessive use of pesticides/herbicides would promote the use of nontoxic or less toxic approval alternatives, thus improving the health of residents and safeguard our environment.

Thank you,  
Michael Green, resident of Highland Green"

**Addendum - Maine towns with pesticide ordinances (also provided by Michael Green):** Allagash, Amherst, Arrowsic, Blue Hill, Brighton Plantation, Brunswick, Castine, Coplin Plantation, Cranberry Isles, Falmouth, Harpswell, Lebanon, Limerick, Limestone, Manchester, Montville, Newburgh, New Gloucester, New Sweden, Ogunquit, Owl's Head, Portland, Rangeley, Rockland, South Portland, Southport, Standish, Sweden, Waterboro, Wayne, Wells, Hallowell.