

Topsham Conservation Commission

Final - Approved at March 9, 2021 meeting.

February 9, 2021 at 5:30

Remote Meeting on Zoom

In attendance: Shana Stewart Deeds, Victor Langelo, Rod Melanson, Steve Pelletier, Raija Suomela and Robin Brooks, 47 Ivanhoe Drive.

Meetings open to all, please contact the Topsham Planning Office to receive a Zoom link to join us.

I. Approval of January 12, 2021 minutes.

Approved with Raija's changes. Victor made a motion to accept, Steve seconded, all were in favor of accepting the Jan. minutes with Raija's changes..

II. Finalize Paper Streets recommendations

- A. Report from site walk of paper streets in Heights neighborhood.
- B. Consideration of any changes to our rankings.

Victor went on a site visit around the water tower/ High Street with Yvette Meunier's husband, Tom Gilbert, to assess the paper streets there. The area has very heavily used trails. Despite use, these paper streets don't seem critical as people can get to the water tower property at the end of Oak St. Victor will make updates to our paper streets recommendations with this updated information.

Steve can check back in with Matt Nixon regarding the need to revisit Philipon drive off Foreside Rd near the Muddy River. The trail along the Muddy River (from Foreside road bridge east toward Baxter woods) was an informal trail and there is now a sign that says no trespassing.

Action Items:

Victor will make updates to our paper streets recommendations.

Steve can check back in with Matt Nixon regarding the need to revisit Philipon drive off Foreside Rd near the Muddy River.

We should all take one more review of our Paper Street recommendations. We will turn in the excel file after Victor makes his final notes.

III. Drill down on Comprehensive Plan implementation matrix

- A. What can we work on in the coming year.
- B. 2-3 year priorities.

There is a Strategy Matrix at the end of the Comp Plan with actionable items that identify action items to facilitate realizing the 2019 comprehensive vision. The initiatives have been assigned a timeline: 1=short term, 3=medium, 5 is longer term. TCC continued to add comments to the Comp plan implementation matrix and discuss short term priorities.

We will continue reviewing this matrix at future meetings in order to set goals.

IV. Updates

A. Budget status.

We submitted budget and expenditures for this year. Rod will check status.

The most up to date budget is in the google drive.

We are looking to establish protocols for spending of conservation funds from solar projects, habitat mitigation fees and subdivision open space fees. Generally, we can recommend the use of funds, but the Selectboard has decision making authority. Perhaps we should see protocols that go to the Selectboard for a yes or no vote.

Action Item: Rod will inquire about TDI and Topsham Community Fund (TCF) spending protocols, as they are the most likely groups to have similar protocols. Rod provided a link to the TCF ordinance that outlines their annual process: <https://ecode360.com/9084840>

Establishing these spending protocols might be a good priority for 2021. Strengthening BTLT/TCC relationships could help any conservation funds to go farther.

B. Property for sale near Twin Pond road on Androscoggin River. BTLT is looking at that property. The abutting neighbors talked to BTLT. It's in our priority area. Owner sold parcel along Foreside Rd about 10 years ago, but there is a ROW to the Foreside Rd. Could provide access to the River. This property is identified as important in the Natural Areas plan. There was potentially quality species habitat identified (species and details not remembered).

C. We discussed the Topsham Conservation TCC Facebook page. There were some questions about it when Victor updated the Selectboard on our annual report. TCC wishes to follow municipal protocol for the Facebook page.

Action Item: Rod will share with Derek (Town Manager) the TCC Facebook page link and let him know we are working to be above board with posts. We will be sure to follow municipal protocol if it exists, so Rod will ask Derek to share protocols.

D. Shana's class will be working on a solar project

Shana asked Victor and Steve about their work on the Topsham Solar Advocates and the new Town Ordinance on solar. Her students are going to be engaged in a project on solar siting this semester. The maps of three-phase power are not shared, and could be useful to the Town. The Topsham Energy Committee folks have resources that could be helpful for Shana.

E. Green lawn care update

MOFGA is tracking legislation, and there's a bill regulating neonicotinoids for residential use that has been sponsored. There is a public hearing at 930am on Feb 18.

V. Review Action Items

Please check out the Action Items file on the Google Drive. Move items to completed when they are done. Think about priorities for 2021.

VI. Ideas for agenda items for the next meeting

A. Joint meeting with BTLT Lands Committee (Check in about the Foreside Road property. Victor shared the David Drive site visit report with them.)

B. Potential upcoming activities:

Transfer station walk

Forestry and NA plan updates

Get ball rolling for off line work (work on action items and Committee 2021 work outside of meetings)

A motion was made to adjourn at 6:45pm by Victor, Shana seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Secretary, Shana Stewart Deeds