

Topsham Conservation Commission
(TCC)

Minutes Approved 03/08/2022

February 15, 2022 at 5:30 pm

Topsham Town Office and via Zoom.

In attendance: Audie Arbo, Kate Burch (Assistant Town Planner), Rod Melanson (Planning Director, in-person at the Town Office), Shana Stewart Deeds, Victor Langelo, Steve Pelletier, Raija Suomela and Angela Twitchell. Meetings open to all, please contact the Topsham Planning Office if you'd like to join us via Zoom or in person.

I. Approval of Jan 11 meeting minutes.

II. Introductions

TCC introduced themselves to the new Assistant Town Planner, Kate Burch, who comes to us from the South Portland Sustainability Office where she focused on planning in Portland. We were glad to welcome her.

III. Election of Chair and Secretary.

Victor was nominated for TCC Chair by Raija and the motion was seconded by Steve. Victor accepted the nomination but indicated that he'd like to help someone transition into that position in the future. Shana was nominated for TCC Secretary and the motion was seconded by Victor. Shana accepted the nomination. Both motions passed unanimously.

IV. Develop recommendation on use of Town conservation funds for BTLT priority project.

Angela Twitchell joined us to answer questions about the Scyzmecki - Hideaway Farm property that the Brunswick Topsham Land Trust (BTLT) is hoping to purchase and conserve. We discussed access that would likely be from the existing, approved railroad crossing at the end of Katie Lane and from Hideaway Farm as well. The river frontage of the property is part of what makes it a high priority for conservation and a high value natural area.

The selling price is reasonable for waterfront property. TCC considered funds that might be used to support the project. Solar funds are expected but may not be in accounts before the June deadline for purchase of the property. There are funds in the Open Space in Lieu Fee account that may be used, but we agreed that the Recreational Department should be consulted due to the recreation and open space joint use of the funds.

Because this would not be a huge sum or a purchase of the property, the use of funds to support this project does not seem to need to go to Town Meeting (this should be confirmed), but will need to be approved by the Select Board. If we decide to support this project, it would be helpful to BTLT to give a

commitment of up to ____ dollars based on what is still needed for the project after fundraising between now and May.

Action Item: Rod will need to confirm if it can go through Select Board and not Town Meeting.

Meet with Select Board to finalize methods for requesting and spending Open Space in Lieu Fees.

BTLT will own the property and permanently conserve it. Trails for recreation will be part of the management plan should it be purchased by BTLT. Put-ins for paddling and connection to the Merrymeeting Trail system are possible for the future.

There is no indication that a preharvest or cutting would occur before purchase.

Raija would like recreational access for all to be considered, including the possibility of a paved section of trail.

Audie made a motion to work with the Recreation Department to finalize an ask for up to \$20k from open space in lieu fee for this project at Hideaway Farm. Steve seconded the motion and all were unanimously in favor.

Action Item: Victor will reach out to Pam/Recreation Department before the next meeting to discuss supporting this project and Angela is happy to talk to folks as needed as well.

Victor will follow up with the Select Board to workshop a spending procedure for open space in lieu funds. Rod will help to get this on the Agenda.

V. Annual Plan for 2022.

We ran out of time to finalize our annual plan for the year, but brainstormed a start to the list of priorities. This will be discussed further in future meetings.

- NAP (Natural Areas Plan) update
- Review the Town forest and decide if we need a plan on the Merrill Rd property
- Invasive species mgmt.
 - Project canopy grants can be considered for town-owned properties such as Head of Tide, Foreside Fields, Library, TSWAF
- Revisit the activities of the Tree Committee
 - Perhaps include discussion of invasives such as the emerald ash borer (EAB)
 - Proper mulching of trees on Town Owned properties
 - Promoting native species
- Library talks - partner with CREA? Table at CREA for TCC at the upcoming April vernal pool talk (reach out to Caroline Elliott)
<https://www.creamaine.org/event/collaborative-community-conservation-for-vernal-pools/>
- Continue Social communication and outreach - Cryer, social media
 - PFAS
 - Groundwater
 - Vernal pools
 - NAP

VI. Updates.

A. Notes from Select Board update/Budget meeting debrief.

Victor felt that the Select board seemed receptive to our plan to spend open space in lieu funds, the interaction was positive. We are also requesting \$40K over 2 years for the NAP update which we hope will be added as a line item in the budget.

B. Update on zoning change for multi-parcel solar development.

Glendale Solar - the large solar farm heading out on Rt 196 toward Lisbon - is requesting a zoning change to change ordinance for internal lot lines. The Planning Board was in support.

Action Item: Revisit solar placement and buildout when we look at the NAP.

C. TSWF forest management plan discussion with Pam and Ed.

Steve talked to Pam and Ed and Rod about the TSWAF forest addendum (2/11/22) to the 2011 forest mgmt. plan. Steve will finish the addendum with comments from TCC and Pam/Ed talk and send draft around for final approval.

D. Rod spoke to CPIC regarding TCC's desire to update the NAP. As they are working to incentivize Smart Growth in the core, they are happy to know we are working on smart growth in the rural area.

VII. Agenda items for future meetings.

- SAMP update, perhaps invite Aram and Liz in the future
- Finalize TSWSF addendum
- Create an Annual Plan for 2022
- CPIC update

Shana made a motion to adjourn, and Victor seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 7:12pm.