

Topsham Conservation Commission

Minutes Approved at the 04-13-21 Meeting

March 9, 2021 at 5:30 pm

Remote Meeting on Zoom

In attendance: Shana Stewart Deeds, Margaret Gerber, Julie Isbill, Wells Johnson, Victor Langelo, Rod Melanson, Jeff Nelson, Keisha Payson, Steve Pelletier, Kristen Puryear, Carla Rensenbrink, Sandy Stott, Raija Suomela, Angela Twitchell, Margaret Wilson

I. Welcome and introductions.

The Topsham Conservation Commission (TCC) was joined by members of the Brunswick Topsham Land Trust (BTLT). Each attendee introduced themselves and their role in the organizations.

II. Approval of February 9, 2021 minutes.

Steve made a motion to accept minutes as written, the motion passed unanimously.

III. Discussion with BTLT Lands Committee of recent projects and opportunities in Topsham.

BTLT and TCC discussed conservation priorities, and properties that were of interest in Town. No decisions were made.

BTLT has a strategic conservation plan and has identified focus areas in Topsham that include: large, undeveloped habitat blocks, trail and habitat connections, good agricultural soils or active farms, and river corridors and riparian areas.

We discussed areas in Tree growth, which runs with the land. New owners have one year to write a new plan or keep the old one. New owners can roll the acreage over to farm or open space to get out of tree growth, but back taxes may need to be paid. A Property disclosure about tree growth should be provided at the time of sale.

A. Middlesex Rd status.

BTLT and the landowner remain in conversation about a possible easement. This property is in a natural areas focus area and near the Muddy River.

B. David Dr./Deer Run Town owned property.

TCC did a site visit to this property in December of 2020. TCC members shared their thoughts with BTLT. The subdivision plans fell through when the stream crossing became prohibitively expensive. The property has a nice riparian corridor and wetland system with beaver activity.

C. Foreside Rd. near Twin Pond

BTLT was contacted by neighbors about this property. This property is in a natural areas focus area and near the Androscoggin River. This property may contain vernal pools and has wetlands based on the aerial photo.

D. Timing of walk of Androscoggin Woods property.

This is a new BTLT property with lots of Androscoggin River frontage. BTLT and TCC are planning a walk in early May. The hope is to create public trails in the future.

E. BTLT plan and NA plan

Updating the Natural Areas plan is on the TCC agenda this year. See this item below.

F. Other

Since the new ME Climate action plan has a focus on conservation, there could be additional focus on conservation lands that meet the climate change criteria - particularly along the Androscoggin and Merrymeeting Bay. Gov. Mills is looking into how we can value tree growth for carbon sequestration.

NRCS money is becoming available for protecting shorelines. Applications are due soon.

The Coastal Community grant funds are due in April and are focused on resiliency.

IV. Change in recommendation for Philippon Dr paper street?

That subdivision and that paper street may not exist. It's a mystery that needs title research and documentation by Title attorneys.

V. Town policy on meeting recordings and how they're shared.

Videos are recorded but not posted on the website. We do not have live streaming for meetings. Recordings are removed from zoom and archived on their old server. Videos are not mandated to be shared. Minutes are mandated by State statute, and are kept in perpetuity. Minutes on web will go back 5 years, the rest are achieved by the Town.

VI. Natural Areas Plan review.

We should all reread the NA Plan. We could use a good GIS person to assist for Town mapping like Judy did before. Rod will ask her if she is interested in helping us update the spatial data and maps for the plan.

From MEACC conferences, other towns have good advice on how to handle open space subdivisions and maintaining viewsheds - something to consider for this update.

We may also wish to review deer wintering habitats, as none are listed in the current plan.

Action item: Rod will talk with Judy about interest/cost in updating the GIS spatial data and maps.

TCC needs to talk with Mark about the list.

VII. Updates.

Steve is meeting at Matt's house tomorrow at 9am if TCC members can join.

Quant value is \$. State of VT is looking into how LO can value standing timber.

Kevin Duran called Steve regarding a pedestrian easement on the walking path off of Somerset that has a water district easement. Kevin Duran also has interest in reviving the defunct tree committee. We will ask him if he wants to join the TCC and be the head of a new tree subcommittee.

Action items: Victor can write a letter to Craig to see about ensuring a pedestrian easement on the path since pedestrian connections and access are town values in the comp plan. Rod will contact Tom Bethea.

VIII. Review Action Items

A. Timing of Solid Waste Facility walk-through.

We will walk through to consider a Forest Management Plan on **T 3/30 at 4pm.**

B. Planting at Head of Tide Park.

Raija will let us know when plants arrive; we should plant them a couple of days after plants arrive around the end of April/early May.

IX. Ideas for agenda items for the next meeting

A. Funds usage policy. Rod will get something to us in a few weeks.

B. Schedule any VP walks.

C. Get our paper streets to Mark.

A motion was made by Shana to adjourn, the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:09pm.