

Topsham Conservation Commission

Minutes Approved 6/8/21

May 11, 2021 at 5:30 pm

Remote Meeting on Zoom

In attendance: Shana Stewart Deeds, Victor Langelo, Rod Melanson, Steve Pelletier, Raija Suomela, Tom Gilbert (ME Forest Service), Audie Arbo (potential new member)

I. Approval of April 13, 2021 meeting minutes.

Motion made to approve minutes as written. Motion seconded and approved.

II. [Maine Invasive Plant Management Program](#)

- A. Grant to develop an invasive plant management plan
- B. An approved plan allows for free treatment

Tom Gilbert from the Maine Forest Service came to discuss the grants available in Maine for invasive plant management. The property must be from 10-1,000 acres. The plan is prepared by a resource professional that went through the ME Invasive Plant Management training (Tom is not eligible to do the plan for us). It would provide for few invasive plant treatment. The Town could be reimbursed for up to half the cost of the plan (Steve estimates it would be between \$2000-4000), which would need to be funded by the Town. TCC discussed the program with Tom. If the Town applied, the management would need to be on Town lands (or potentially in conjunction with State or Land Trust properties). The rec fields and library are the properties that seem to make the most sense/be eligible. We could use these high visibility areas as educational/example properties for native plant restoration and invasive removal. **Victor will check into the list of potential resource professionals, as the program is just getting underway, there is not yet a list. Application are due soon (May 31, though that may be extended).** Steve made a motion to fill out an application and get it to the Selectboard for their approval. Victor seconded. Late June would likely be the earliest we could get on their agenda.

III. After Tom left we completed full introductions for Audie Arbo, who is interested in joining the TCC.

IV. Updates needed in habitat and new building permit data

1. Windham Growth Mgmt. - Growth Permits
2. Extend habitat mitigation fee to all development
3. Increase lot size of R3 subdivision to incentivize open space subdivisions
4. Increased open space requirements in focus areas.
5. Create NAP implementation task planning / implementation tracking tool

The TCC continued to discuss the need to update our Natural Areas Plan (NAP). Any of these tools would need to be explored by the TCC. We were discussing examples/ideas/possibilities. Perhaps the Bowdoin intern could explore impacts on the focus areas since the NAP was adopted. If we had maps of the potential buildout with the current zoning, and the impacts (current and potential) on the high and medium/high NAP areas, it may be useful to understanding whether our natural areas are being protected as we value by a town.

A. Ideas/examples from other Maine municipalities were reviewed including Windham. Windham issues a limited number of growth permits in certain zones (in Topsham those would likely be limited in our rural zone).

B. Currently habitat mitigation fees for solar was originally proposed to apply to all development in the focus areas of the NAP, based on amount of area disturbed by development. The final ordinance only includes those impacted by solar in the high and medium/high ranked areas in the NAP. Perhaps a tool that might be accepted by the Town would be to extend that to all development.

C/D. Though there was interest and discussion about zoning changes in the Town Plan update, currently the Implementation Committee is focusing on zoning updates only in the downtown area. This process is in the beginning stages and will include public input.

E. We will invite Judy Colby-George to our next TCC meeting to discuss NAP map updates and community forums. The maps may not change much, but the Town values and rankings may.

V. Updates

A. Genvale Solar development on R02-072, R02-063, R02-093

Victor sent a link to the TCC. This development is likely 3-5 months away before it is at the Town, 200 acres of property 150 acres of solar development. There was discussion of pesticide use, that is prohibited by ordinance. Victor will keep up updated with their response/as the project moves ahead.

in Audie's backyard, forested wetland, loss of forest and wetland, not a big field, TSolarAdv dev a letter about how to manage vegetation, talk about using pesticides and prohibited by ordinance, truing to get them rto follow the rules, sent to them, see about response

B. Debrief on planting at Head of Tide Park.

Native planting at Head of Tide park went smoothly.

C. Selectboard updates from Rod-

1. There is exploration of the feasibility of a boat launch off Foreside rec fields on sewer pump station property. If it is installed, a monitoring station for sea level rise along with water quality monitoring in the Andro may also occur.
2. Topsham Fair Mall is looking to install a rain garden, as mentioned in their watershed plan. They put in a permit. Could be a great educational opportunity.

D. Raija mentioned the hope for moving forward with a loop walking trail at Head of Tide park. It would require permission for some minimal chainsaw use to clean up the trail.

VI. Upcoming agenda items.

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A. Funds usage policy

B. Common good application

Steve made motion to adjourn, Victor seconded. This meeting was adjourned at 7:10 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Secretary, Shana Stewart Deeds.