

## Topsham Conservation Commission (TCC)

Meeting Minutes Approved 09/09/24

Monday June 3, 2024 at 5:30 pm

Topsham Town Office

Meetings open to all

Attendees: Victor Langelo, Audie Arbo, Angie Brewer, Skye Siladi (Director of Planning), Josh Franklin (Town Planner), Pam Belford (CPIC, Liaison to TCC)

- I. Approve May 6, 2024 minutes and Appoint a secretary for the meeting.

May meeting minutes were tabled since no quorum was achievable as Angie wasn't present at May meeting.

- II. Update from Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee on Recode - Pam Belford

Pam Belford spoke to the TCC to appraise members of CPIC's ReCode process and timeline. There was an informational meeting held in May, and CPIC is now engaged in public outreach for work of two subcommittees. The next meeting will be held on June 10th, when Victor will speak with CPIC about TCC recommendations. All committee members and the public are invited to a meeting on June 18th. The draft revised code now shows CPICs plans based on the last two years of work. CPIC is soliciting feedback from TCC, which Victor prepared and presented (see next agenda item on rural zoning).

- III. Proposed changes to rural zoning and process for implementation.

Victor spoke on potential revisions to the R3 zone. He stated that conservation areas consist largely of unfragmented habitat and he recommends keeping them that way, as supported by the 2008 NAP enacted in 2010. Victor presented information from a "Proposed Changes to Rural Zoning" document. In recent years, no open space or large lot subdivisions have been built and the NAP is not working because only traditional subdivisions are being built, resulting in loss of open space. Victor proposes to remove the traditional subdivision type from the R3 zone and add a habitat mitigation fee on any development. Any fees collected would go into a dedicated account for use in conserving higher value habitat properties.

Attendee discussion helped clarify that "subdivisions" include at least three properties.

Additionally, the stakeholders for any rezoning would be landowners in that R3 zone, who may not have previously supported such a proposal, though the changing profile of landowners in Topsham could result in more buy-in. Other discussion points included:

- A. Open space development could be an olive branch but does this allow greater housing density? Open space development results in less road construction and culvert installation, which are very expensive for developers. Josh suggested the need to make open space development attractive to developers.

- B. How would a habitat mitigation fee be calculated, and how would the area of impact be determined? How would habitat value be assigned?

Skye expressed concern about adding this suggested change to the ReCode since it is late in process and this would be a major change. It's hard to do an open space subdivision well. She suggested adding this change into the NAP update in coordination with the Planning Board, especially since development urgency in rural areas may be decreasing. Victor will compile ideas as to how to make open space development more attractive to developers based on other open space subdivisions that have worked. Skye suggested not removing traditional subdivisions but incentivizing open space ones. Audie suggested preserving open space corridors as a potential exemption from a habitat mitigation fee?

- IV. De-brief of Town Forest site walk and future actions and review the Town Forest visit notes.

The site visit did not reveal evidence of damage to habitat. Chris suggested managing the property (ex. selective cut) as done at the Transfer Station and Foreside Fields. Few invasives were observed. Property could make good biking trails but access remains a problem.

- V. Proposed summer intern project.

- A. Update Patterns of Development in Topsham Story Map.

Suggested that having a revision to this project for development since 2021 would be useful.

- B. Add a build-out analysis based on current zoning.

Analysis would illustrate what a build-out given existing zoning code would look like. The intern might be challenged to interpret rasters for drawing parcel-specific buffers as its easier to work with polygon features. Perhaps an intern in concert with TCC could select a high value conservation area in R3 zone (maybe R2 if time) and then show how development could appear in that location, using a traditional subdivision as a model. The Bowdoin intern, Issie, is starting on Friday, June 7th.

## VI. Updates

### A. Eagle River plan update.

The Strawberry Lane esplanade is now proposed for the interior of street. Skye will ask why the esplanade does not extend to Raspberry Lane. The Town could add a requirement in the future to add a sidewalk if more lots are added. Skye needs an updated letter by June 21st in order to prepare it for the Planning Board. She will clarify if the cost of installing the esplanade is included in the revised application. Development plans are still in the preliminary phase, so now is the time to affect these changes. The Planning Board probably won't leverage a fee if an effort is being made by the developer, so it's important for the TCC to provide detailed feedback. The TCC members held a vote to support updating the TCC letter before June 21st. Victor will provide this revision and use the cost analysis to inform the letter, which TCC members will discuss and then submit.

Minutes submitted by Angela Brewer

## VII. 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. Christine Cole tree watering schedule:

June – Audie

July – Victor

August – Chris

September – Jeanne Bamforth

October - Shana