

Topsham Conservation Commission
Final Minutes Approved 07/13/21
June 8, 2021 at 5:30 pm
Remote Meeting on Zoom

In Attendance: Audie Arbo, Judy Colby-George (Spatial Alternatives), Shana Stewart Deeds, Payal Gangishetti (Times Record), Victor Langelo, Rod Melanson, Steve Pelletier, Raija Suomela

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

I. Approval of May 11, 2021 meeting minutes

Steve made a motion to accept minutes as written, Raija seconded the motion. The motion was passed with unanimous approval.

II. New Member Welcome

The Select Board voted Audie into the Topsham Conservation Commission as our newest member - welcome! Shana's appointment was also renewed in June.

III. Natural Areas Plan update

A. Updating Maps

- B. Interactive mapping for public forum - Judy Colby-George from Spatial Alternatives joined us to discuss the mapping we as a committee need for the NAP update and what we might need for public forums/outreach.

Judy joined the TCC meeting to discuss the mapping and data she put together for the 2010 NAP.

Judy recalled that we did a lot of mapping over the 2.5 years that TCC worked on the NAP, in the end what we took to create the final, prioritized and ranked polygons had a lot of mapping behind it. It was a very data driven habitat analysis of where in Topsham we should conserve land, and included multiple opportunities for resident input.

As part of this update process we will want to potentially request new data from Beginning with Habitat.

For the update - we should look at what were the impacts the development and zoning/policies and NAP priorities from the first NAP had on development over the last 10+ years.

We should update data, tell a slightly different story (build out analysis, scenarios). The NAP plan should be easily readable for a citizen to understand and tell the story of how the plan is designed to shape our town's conservation priorities. We should consider new data and new ways to show info. Since the NAP there are new tools - interactive mapping, ArcGIS online, story maps, interactive mapping on webpages and more.

We should update the physical data. These days we now have LiDAR data, not just topo, and can redo mapping based on that if we think it matters. We will decide what data layers make sense to spend time and \$ on. Solar is a new data layer.

We can consider mapping current development, build-out maps, and visually show what our laws could make the town look like.

TCC needs to develop a scope of work for the NAP update. This may include contracting out the mapping/GIS or public outreach work on the NAP update. This discussion will continue at upcoming TCC meetings.

Then we will make a proposal to the Select Board

Create a cost estimate and budget, perhaps consider for the next fiscal year July 1, 2022 - 2023

Consider what portion of work can be done by a summer intern.

We will need to solicit public feedback on the NAP, revise with citizen input.

What makes sense for the intern to help with this summer (Perhaps build on Ripley's timeline of development?)

Action Item: TCC needs to outline a plan for how to make the NAP revisions.

Action Item: Judy - can look at a layer list from the last NAP and decide which are good ones for the intern to work on.

Rod will get the list out

Action Item: Rod to make prior mapping data available to TCC members somehow

- IV. Funds usage policy - Rod said he would pull some numbers and information on policies for the various funds related to conservation. Rod also has some ideas that I'll get organized and share before the meeting.

Victor put together a draft Policy for Expending Open Space In-lieu Fees which the TCC reviewed. We are working to set a process to allow expenditures from the funds collected for open space protections. Rod suggested that we add language on the "authorization" to expend the funds.

If we want to spend money out of the open space and in lieu fee funds the process seems to be:

- 1-determine the request for expenditure (amount, validity...)
- 2-Request the Selectboard to spend the money
- 3-See if the funds are released or not

Action Item: After Victor makes the revisions discussed at this meeting, we will circulate the policy for inputs. We will review again, with the target of having a near-final draft by September, ready to share with the Select Board. Perhaps this could be a template for expenditures of other accounts as well.

Conservation-related accounts include:

- Open Space In-lieu Fees

- Habitat mitigation fee
- Forestry account - recommendation we spend on forestry
- (Compensation fee for stormwater, set up by the state and bound by state rules for TFM watershed through DEP)

Action Item: Rod will get numbers on amount of money paid for the above fees/amount currently available in account(s).

V. Updates

- a. Rod had a positive interaction with a landowner about an open space subdivision off West Merrill Road. **Action Item:** Perhaps Rod can check to see if this property is in our priority NAP.
- b. Deer Run/David Drive Property - We discussed the potentiality for public access. **Action Item:** Victor needs to formally pass along our write-up to Mark Waltz.
- c. General comment - Hopefully there will be more policy discussion around road construction and discussion when roads are accepted - and tie back to our NAP ideas.
- d. Raija went out with Angela Twitchell on the loop trail at Head of Tide. A project with TCC in partnership with BTLT to open this loop trail seems like a good fit for 2021. Observation - the dock project seems behind schedule. The manufacturer is behind in shipping supplies. It should go in in two weeks. **Action Item:** TCC should plan a work date for barberry.
- e. Mallet Woods development - Raija visited to cut knotweed today, a lot of hemlock mortality from hemlock wooly adelgid. Also a lot of invasive black swallowwort in Mallet Drive neighborhood.
- f. Victor did not submit the invasive plant removal grant. He first wanted to consult with a plan preparer, reached out to Kyle who said it was too tight a timeline to give a rough estimate. Kyle Rosenberg is the only person Victor knew and thought would do a decent job. We should consider applying for the grant cycle next year. **Action Item:** Perhaps have Kyle come out and check out the rec fields invasives to get ahead of the next grant application.

VI. Public Input

None.

VII. Agenda items for next meeting.

TCC discussed returning to in person meetings. Staff are not required to be at our meetings. We decided to stay on Zoom for the summer. Selectboard will be back in person in July, working to allow for hybrid meetings in person and online. Planning board meetings will be Thursday opposite the Selectboard.

Continue discussion on the loop trail at Head of Tide Park.

Revisit NAP next steps, including data.

Action Item: Rod will talk to Judy about developing a scope of work.

Update open space mapping.

Action Item: Rod will set up an email to introduce us to the Bowdoin intern, let us know about the projects they are working on, and add them to our email.

Action Item: Steve is working on forest plan for TSWaF.

Raija moved to adjourn, Steve seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:03 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Secretary, Shana Stewart Deeds