

Topsham Conservation Commission

Minutes accepted September 13, 2022

June 14, 2022 at 5:30 pm

Topsham Town Office Don Russell Meeting Room or outside if weather permits.

Also available through Zoom.

In attendance: Kate Burch (Assistant Town Planner), Theo Curran (Planning Intern from Bowdoin), Shana Stewart Deeds (Secretary), Victor Langelo (Chair), and Raija Suomela. Also attending: Andrew Paradis (member of public). Meetings open to all, please contact the Topsham Planning Office if you'd like to join us.

I. Approval of May 10 meeting minutes.

Raija made a motion to accept minutes as amended, Victor seconded the motion. The May minutes passed unanimously as amended.

- Introductions - TCC introduced themselves to Theo Curran, the current planning intern from Bowdoin College. Theo is an Econ/ES major and is from Westchester County, NY. The Town also has two interns working with the Town Manager.

II. Finalize assignments for the annual plan.

TCC reviewed the Annual Plan to be sure that all projects were assigned a lead, and folks updated each other on where we are with the goals on which we are taking the lead.

III. Decide on scope of work and outline of RFP for NAP update.

Victor presented the draft RFP for the NAP update. This RFP will be for a two year process.

- We have \$20K in budget for this year, and the same next year
- Depending on who takes the project we may want them to propose an implementation matrix (short and LT goals) (perhaps in the form of a nice two page summary - Immediate, medium and long term goals). This could include zoning changes they recommend based on public input and GIS data analysis.
- Other deliverables include updating maps and data analysis and creating and implementing public engagement with a variety of stakeholders.

IV. Additional tasks for planning intern Theo?

Theo is thinking about projects he is excited about this week, he will decide what engages him and come up with a work plan soon.

- Can Theo look at fee structures in other towns, what kind of fees are other towns charging for development in natural areas? Might he be interested in

finding good models? Let's not reinvent the wheel and learn from others' experience.

Topsham tends to incentivize rather than penalize (reward examples - easements, incentives for higher density development in the growth area of town, can add more units per sq foot than current zoning allows, if they conserve part of the property - developer benefit is to put in more dense housing than they could otherwise and make more profit).

- Interest in formalizing the RFP?
- Update the website? Email webpage update ideas to Kate

V. Updates

- o Victor - Merrymeeting Trail - MMT (Topsham to Gardiner) waiting for ME DOT to form an advisory committee, process by which unused RR corridor can be used for another purpose, two currently in process (Mountain division final report released - recommendation was to turn that line into a trail) one person at MDOT is handling this and seems to do one at a time (MMTrailblazer advocates are asking and Topsham sent a gentle inquiry.) List of suggested people on the MMT advisory committee was provided to MDOT. MDOT started the Casco Bay trails project about when Mountain Division wrapped up, perhaps MMT is next. Mountain Division took 5-6 months, maximum length by ordinance is 9 months. MMT could be used as a RR line to Bangor which complicates things (however it makes more sense to go through Lewiston, more people).
- o Kate - Topsham has a nature based solutions grant at TFM to reduce salt pollution (bioswales, engineered retention ponds...) or to find ways to reduce the area that gets salt applied. They are also tasked with outreach & education, to that end they will be flying a drone along the watershed. **Kate will share** details including the report on breeding fish populations found in TFM stream. Perhaps TCC will wish to help educate residents on the TFM watershed. Consider adding info to the TCC Facebook page as appropriate. **Audie will share** the UNE projects what have had success with salt reduction.

VI. Agenda items for future meetings.

- July - Visit to Town Forest off Merrill Road or work on RFP?
- Review RFP and come ready to finalize. **Audie will offer** an excel file and suggestions on a points scale for the ranking of applicants.
- Annual plan lead updates/action item review
- Check back in about Theo's summer intern activities and connect with him as appropriate
- Skip August meeting for a summer break

Motion to adjourn by Victor, Audie seconded the motion.

TCC meeting adjourned 6:52pm

Minutes respectfully submitted by Shana Stewart Deeds, Secretary.