

Topsham Conservation Commission

Meeting Minutes

Sept 13, 2022 at 5:30 pm

Topsham Town Office

In attendance: Audie Arbo, Kate Burch, Shana Stewart Deeds, Victor Langelo, Steve Pelletier, Hap Stelling, Raija Suomela. Meetings open to all, please contact the Topsham Planning Office to receive a Zoom link to join us.

.Approval of June 14 meeting minutes.

Steve made a motion to approve the June minutes as written, Audie seconded this motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The July 12th meeting, a visit to the Topsham Town Forest, was canceled due to inclement weather. There was no August TCC meeting.

I. Welcome Hap Stelling.

Welcome Hap Stelling, the new Director of Planning (hstelling@topshammaine.com). Hap discussed his background and qualifications for the position. We introduced ourselves to Hap and discussed planning and conservation in Topsham.

II. Review tree survey results.

Kate shared the tree survey results worked on by Bowdoin student, Theo Curran. The survey will be useful if the Town ever wanted to apply for a Project Canopy Grant. The TCC discussed a go-to list for native tree plantings in the Town. There has been good work done in Portland on tree plantings, Steve is going to find this info to provide with the TCC. If we wanted to update a tree list for the Town, it would require us to change the ordinance. This would require us to present recommendations to the Planning Board, workshop the ordinance changes with the Selectboard, and then take any proposed changes to the Selectboard. The landscaping chapter in the Town ordinances was written in the 90s, Kate can provide us with the current ordinance and share the current tree list. These items may be added to the Landscaping Plantings folder in the TCC shared documents.

Action Items: Kate can provide us with the current ordinance and share the current tree list. Steve will provide information on the Portland/South Portland recommendations for trees

III. Recommendations on new town owned properties.

The TCC reviewed our recommendations on Town Owned Properties. Victor will provide our recommendations regarding conservation and recreational value to Assistant Town Manager Mark Waltz by September 30th.

Action Items: Victor will pass along the TCC recommendations to Mark Waltz.

IV. NAP update RFP

We believe that the funding that was budgeted for updating Topsham's Natural Areas Plan will be split over two years. When the RFP is set for this NAP update, TCC will contact Town Manager, Derek Scrapchansky and update the Selectboard on the process. This update will likely start this summer, perhaps to start on July 1, 2023. We should take time at the next meeting to finalize the RFP, and be sure to include deliverables and mileposts. The goals will be to update mapping data, complete data analysis and provide opportunities for Town engagement/feedback. There are several strategies available to us for public engagement, including online community ranking, in addition to public meetings.

V. Updates

A. Christine Cole Memorial

Christine Cole was a founding member of the tree committee. The Town received a \$390 donation in her memory, we are working with the idea of planting a tree and have a memorial bench/plaque in Town, perhaps the library. Victor reached out to library but has not yet received a response back.

Shana checked with Christin's friend Jeanne Bamforth, and she said that "Chris' friends and everyone loves the idea of a bench with plaque and a tree at the Topsham library." Jeanne is checking into a bench, but we can also likely get one from Tad Hunter. If the library is willing to host the memorial, the TCC should look into who can make a plaque, and what tree we should purchase.

Action Items: Victor will reach out to the library regarding this memorial. Shana will update Jeanne when we have more information.

A. MEACC Conference Oct 22 at Curtis Library

Any TCC members who are available should attend the MEACC Conference, it is usually a great event.

B. New solar development proposed at 449 Augusta Rd.

This solar development was approved last year and is back before the Planning Board.

The Sept. 22nd Planning Board meeting will also discuss the mobile home expansion off Lewiston Rd regarding vernal pool setbacks. This will be good to discuss at our next TCC meeting. Kate will send out info and post the vernal pool report online.

D. Raija will be out of TCC meetings for the next three months.

I. Items for future meetings.

RFP for NAP update

Reschedule a visit to Town Forest to review current conditions and prepare for management plan

Discuss Planning Board meeting will also discuss the open space for the mobile home expansion off Lewiston Rd

Motion made by Victor and seconded by Steve to end the meeting; meeting adjourned at 7:14 pm.