

Topsham Conservation Commission (TCC)

Meeting Minutes Approved 12/04/23

Monday Nov 6, 2023 at 5:30 pm

Topsham Town Office. Meetings open to all.

Attendees: Audie Arbo, Shana Steward Deeds, Julie Erdman (Planning Director), Victor Langelo, Steve Pelletier

I. Approve Oct 2 minutes.

Audie made a motion to accept the minutes as written, Victor seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

II. Adjustments to the Agenda.

The minutes from last month listed work to move forward with the Natural Areas Plan. We have altered the agenda as we are going to do open space and natural areas outreach and give ourselves more time to get funds and resources available for the update.

III. Update on timing and funding for NAP update

The Conservation Commission discussed the Natural Areas Plan (NAP) and our desire, listed as an action item in the current Town Plan, to update this plan. Currently, the recode efforts are the current focus of the planning office. These recode efforts take most of this year and into next. The planning office is anticipating a Special Town Meeting devoted to the recode to revise the current zoning ordinances and cleaning up code.

The recommendations in the NAP aren't getting as much implementation as we would like. We discussed the need for educational efforts on the options in the NAP and the importance of open space. The hope that perhaps a summer intern might help with some mapping efforts. Our desire to continue to request that the Town fund our efforts to update the NAP, and the option of looking at grant money to do so.

IV. Report from the MEACC Annual Meeting.

TCC members who attended updated the committee on the ME Association of Conservation Commissions (MEACC) annual meeting.

A. Bridgeton's Open Space planning effort.

This planning effort was focused on recreational opportunities, connecting open space and reducing vehicular travel.

B. Experience from other CC with open space subdivision ordinances.

There was a round table discussion about other towns' open space subdivision ordinances. Topsham has one, but it is not used much.

V. Edits and improvements to our outreach material.

The Committee review the draft outreach material on the importance of open space. We still need to define it and perhaps add some photos.

VI. Review of Comp Plan implementation strategies the CC can work on.

We began reviewing the strategies for protecting open space that were outlined in the Town's Comprehensive Plan with a focus on those where TCC was identified as having a possible responsibility in the implementation. In the next meeting we will generate a list of suggested Comp Plan implementation tasks, from the implementation matrix, so TCC can prioritize actions for next year.

VII. Updates

An Open Space ordinance was adopted in the November 2nd special town meeting. TCC will discuss the suggested changes to this Open Space ordinance at our next meeting.

VIII. Items for upcoming meetings

- A. Don't forget to check the action items list and mark items as 'done' when completed
- B. Head of Tide monitoring
- C. Work with BTLT to identify potential Vernal Pools where the SAMP could be used