

Topsham Conservation Commission

Meeting Minutes Approved 03/06/23

Dec 13, 2022 at 5:30 pm

Meetings open to all at the Topsham Town Office and via Zoom.

Attendees - TCC: Victor Langelo, Audie Arbo, Raija Suomela, Shana Stewart Deeds, Steve Pelletier

Guests: Aram Calhoun, Megan Leach

Staff Liaison: Julie Erdman

I. Approval of Nov 8, 2022 minutes

Motion made by Steve to accept the minutes as written, seconded by Victor. Approval of the minutes passed unanimously.

II. Consideration of update to Vernal Pool SAMP ordinance.

Discussion with Aram Calhoun and Megan Leach. Developed in partnership with town staff, TCC and input from a town developer (J. Hanson). Megan Leach is a grad student studying barriers to using SAMP and how to improve it.

The recent mobile home park expansion project did not leverage the SAMP. Reasons discussed. The area had been re-zoned from commercial to residential. The difference to the assessed values ended up too small. Also, the vernal pools had already been mapped, so there hadn't been a cost considerations for mapping obligations on those pools.

Considering clarifying/adding Minimum Fee formula into ordinance. Orono has a minimum fee, but it was missed from Topsham.

Army Corp "No Net Loss" of wetlands.

One idea on the topic of clustering of pools - if 3 pools within 100 feet of each other, that is one system.

State regulations - 'significant' and 'not significant'. Army Corp jurisdiction pools - fewer pools are falling into that regulation. There needs to be a significant nexus for them to be drawn in.

SAMP is a voluntary mitigation tool - not required. Megan will send maps and Orono language for a minimum fee.

Megan developed a GIS program to help towns identify vernal pools in rural areas that meet all the criteria for the SAMP. Perhaps prime parcels in Topsham could be identified so that if they are up for development we outreach to land owners regarding the use of the SAMP. It would be beneficial to have an example project completed in one of the towns with this ordinance.

Victor made a motion that Steve seconded to move forward with proposing minor amendments to the VP SAMP to that it may be utilized. All were in favor.

Action items:

Consider a January or February meeting with Don Spann and Jim Howard regarding a friendly amendment to the existing SAMP ordinance.

Work with BTLT because they are also interested in Vernal Pool mapping.

III. Adding landscaping specifications to the Re-Code effort.

TCC discussed editing the landscaping section in the site plan ordinance to remove invasives and recommend native trees. The goal is to suggest no more than a paragraph of language to the consultants working on the recode effort.

Action items:

Rajah will keep her eye out during CPIC meetings for code with landscaping language, and pass along our suggestions to the consultants for discussion. Raija will also look into providing TCC with the SUNY ESP urban forestry list.

Shana will send TCC something to react to before the next meeting.

IV. Updates

Christine Cole Memorial Tree – Victor and Shana met with Susan at the Topsham Library. They are willing to host the memorial tree. Sarah, the landscape consultant, will help TCC pick the tree. Shana will ask Susan for suggestions on where to order the plaque. It needs to be flush with the ground to facilitate mowing.

V. Items for upcoming meetings

- A. NAP RFP review
- B. FB Environmental presentation on mall
- C. Head of Tide monitoring