

Monkton ANAC Meeting Minutes for 7 January, 2015

In Attendance

Members: Deb Gaynor, Sam Burr, and Laura Farrell.

Absent: Rachel Schattman and Corine Farewell

Guests:, Mel Huff (C), Bob Hyams (C), Roelof Booumans (C), and Al Karnatz (NH), Susan Smiley (NH), and Ruth Penfield (NH), where (C) and (NH) denote the guest as belonging to either the Charlotte (C) or New Haven (NH) Conservation Commissions.

1) Laura called the meeting to order (7:20 pm)

2) Al briefly discussed the newest project in front of VLT. Given how good the soils are, they expect the appraisal to be high. The appraisal will be done in the spring, so any request to the VHCB will likely not go forward until 2016.

3) Laura began the intertown conservation meeting with introductions, and followed with a discussion of each groups' activities.

- a) Al: NH CC is only three years old. They did not want to start off with planning and regulations, and focused on education instead. They started with the Landowner-Naturalist Education series, and are now involved in the UVM/Shelburne Farms Place-Based Landscape Analysis Program. They have had Jens Hilke come to talk about how to incorporate wildlife planning into the Town Plan.
 - a. Susan: solar siting is a big focus for the town now, and Susan is acting as a liaison from the CC to the PC.
 - b. Sam: how is the CC structured? Al: we are appointed by the SB with 3 year terms, and currently have 5 members for 7 positions.
 - c. They meet about 5 times during the winter, and not at all in the summers. They've had Laura talk about bobcats, a deer biologist, the state bear biologist is coming in a few weeks, and similar talks.
 - d. Bob: posting these educational meetings on the AVCC listserve (Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions) would be great. See the website to sign up for the listserve.
- b) Roel: The Town Planner alerts the CC when a project is coming in, and there is a lot of overlap with the PC (about a third of the members of the PC have been on the CC previously), and conservation goals have been written into the Town Plan.
 - a. Sam: is there a DRB? Bob: No, the PC covers both roles. The strong relationship between the PC and the CC is of long standing (>10 years), and the CC has been very involved in writing the relevant sections of the Town Plan for several iterations.
 - b. Bob: The same information that may be used to evaluate a subdivision could be used as a resource for the PC to talk to prospective developers to guide their planning, rather than coming into play later on, in a more adversarial situation.
 - c. Susan: Do you envision this as more of a query process, or how would it work. Bob: The town has a wildlife habitat map through the Chittenden RPC website. Sam: did you hire someone to create this map? Bob: Yes, we hired Jesse Mohr when he was still at UVM to create this map, and it is really nice.
 - d. Ruth: how is this map maintained? Bob: every 5 years we review the polygons and update them, and the reports that underlay them are updated on an ongoing basis. Roel: all the polygons relate back to a report. They are continuing to add layers to it, including "public values" like view sheds and steep slopes. The hope is that parcels with very high

public values will be a red flag for developers to realize that getting all the permits for these high-valued parcels will be more challenging.

- c) Monkton: Laura: The rationale for habitat connectivity planning is the basis for having these meetings—we want to be planning on the right scale.
- 4) Maps! Paper maps from Charlotte and New Haven and Monkton, and digital maps from Charlotte.
- a) Charlotte: we used significant habitat maps from the national land cover maps, and they will make a site visit to verify the information.
 - b) Laura: presented our maps from ACRPC, and discussed that this map are part of our Town Plan.
 - c) Sam: Kevin Behm is a big help with the maps and the Town Plan process.
 - d) Susan: how do you go from wildlife sightings data to establishing what the corridors are? Laura: Kevin is making us a map to determine where connective habitat and narrow passage points are. The wildlife sightings do not contribute directly to creation of a wildlife corridor map. Sam: The DRB does not have a real resource in the town to explain the maps to them, or to applicants. Our DRB has several weaknesses, including high turnover, a limited number of people on the board who know how to use these maps, and we could contribute to improving that situation.
 - e) Al: would you consider merging the CC and ANAC? Doesn't Charlotte's CC have a lot of influence on the use of the town's conservation fund? Bob: well, sometimes. Laura: the CC is pretty swamped with their current project, and we're not in a position to make any changes right now.
 - f) Ruth: as a member of a Land Trust in Connecticut, it was necessary to work hard to influence the Town Plan, and the amount of development was the big challenge. Putting conservation easements of any kind on the parcels they wanted to protect was the strategy they followed. They were able to identify some property owners who wanted to protect their entire properties, and they focused on those. Education of landowners is key.
 - g) Bob: people may not all buy into wildlife habitat and corridor protection.
 - h) Roel: introduced the digital map—there are 949 parcels, they may have not all have had evaluations, and many of the ones that have been done have not been digitized. Bob: When a parcel is up for development review, the town may actually hire a wildlife biologist to do an assessment. The system is built so new data flows into the maps automatically. The map includes "Linkage Habitat" which is based on analysis of what type of habitat is between polygons. The map is linked to the underlying reports, and you can pull up a report for any polygon directly from the map. These reports will contain all the natural communities, and notes which of the 7 principles are impacted. These principles (core forest, representation [how well is this type represented in the local region], ecological processes, etc) are explained in a technical/users guide on the Charlotte website. We'd like the PC to use this tool to start a conversation even before an application has been submitted. The map is accessible from the Charlotte website and from the Chittenden RPC website.
 - i) Sam: do you hold public informational meetings? Bob: We have a hard time getting members to come, never mind the public. Ruth: people want to know if wildlife is going to be near them, and will want to see maps.
 - j) Laura: Ferrisburgh has taken one of these Natural Resources maps, and put it up at Town Meeting and asked people to mark on the map observations where any of five species have been sighted. If we could all do this, Kevin would turn it into a regional map.
 - k) Roel: the I Naturalist app lets people put in sightings.
 - l) Further discussion: we need to understand the needs and desires of our townspeople. They want not just view sheds and clean water and habitat, but also a place to ride their horses, bike, hike, etc. Sam: each town's plan addresses how the town intersects with its neighbors. Doing a better job of coordinating with our neighboring townss is important to the planning and development process.

m) Bob: Charlotte is going to be very focused on storm water issues going forward.

5) What's important in our shared borders?

Charlotte—Bob—Raven Ridge. Water, wetlands, beavers. Roel—Charlotte is downstream from Monkton, and Charlotte groundwater (because of poor percolation) probably is coming from Monkton. There's a lot of interest in Charlotte in protecting their groundwater. They got an aquifer analysis done. New Haven-- the New Haven Gore is the only shared border with Monkton, and the issue there is water quality—Little Otter Creek, etc. The Watershed Center and the MALT trails are highly valued by New Haven residents.

Monkton—pretty much mirrors their responses.

End of intertown conservation section of the meeting.

6) Sam moved and Laura seconded that we approve the minutes of the November meeting. All in favor with minor amendments.

7) We reviewed our budget request as discussed at the last meeting, and decided we are still in agreement that this is the right request to make.

8) We discussed how the intertown conservation meetings fit with our mission, and what our annual statement in the Town Report should cover. Laura wrote a draft that she will circulate for edits. If there is a Town Fair again, we will plan to be there with brochures and a map to elicit wildlife sightings from attendees.

9) The swamp parcel needs to have its own easement. We need to do a site visit and full workup. If there is going to be a management plan, that needs to be submitted to us for review.

10) The offer stands to have a mapping workshop at the Philo Barn; we will do that when everyone can come. We will draft a thank you letter to LuAnne at our next meeting.

10) We can switch to a morning meeting to work with Rachel's needs; Laura will call Sharon to try to schedule access to Town Hall for a morning meeting, preferably on Feb. 11. Laura will invite Hinesburg and Starksboro for an intertown conservation meeting in March. We will hold a short organizational meeting on March 3rd immediately following Town Meeting.

11) Read over tonight's minutes.

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12) Sam moved to adjourn. Deb seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 11:00.

Respectfully submitted,
Deb Gaynor, for Rachel Schattman, ANAC Secretary