

## TOWN OF MIDDLEBURY CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Monday, July 26, 2021

12:00 – 1:30 PM

In Person Location: **Town Offices, 77 Main Street, Room 116, Middlebury VT**

Join by Web <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85649165419?pwd=NVIlnM0N2dEpCMGtWME03Z0JoenR6QT09>

Join by Phone Dial: **+1 646 558 8656**. When prompted, enter the meeting ID: **856 4916 5419**.  
Not a toll free number. Depending on your long-distance plan, charges may apply.

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Password When prompted, enter this six-digit number: **665134**

### MINUTES

**Present:** Andrew L'Roe, Jeff Howarth, Carol Harden, Molly Anderson, Charlotte Tate, Amy Sheldon

#### 12:00 Call to Order

#### Citizen Comments

M. Anderson asked about the advisability of feeding birds in summer. The response: it is neither necessary nor advisable. The [Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department](#) recommends that Vermonters only feed birds during the winter months (Dec 1-March 31) to avoid attracting bears.

Those who choose to feed the birds should be sure to wash feeders frequently to protect birds from salmonella and other pathogens. Especially with recent songbird epidemics (per [Audubon](#) via [NPR](#))

**Approval of minutes** from [July 5, 2021](#). A sentence about trail maintenance was deemed unnecessary and has been removed. M. Anderson moved to approve the minutes as amended; C. Harden seconded the motion.

Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC) seeks community partners to help add viable projects to the **Otter Creek Tactical Basin Plan** (see [request](#)). As the designated Clean Water Service Provider, ACRPC seeks water quality projects that have the goal of reducing phosphorus (P) entering Lake Champlain. The timeline: to identify viable projects by spring 2022. Likely sources of P in Middlebury are fertilizers used by homeowners (required agricultural practices are not covered by this initiative), eroded soil carried to the fluvial system, and P-containing chemicals (e.g., Roundup and

other glyphosate-containing compounds). Action: A. L'Roe started a potential project list (in [Google Drive here](#)) and asked Commission members to add ideas to the list. He will find out whether funds can be used for education programs [update: they cannot].

### **Conservation Plan update and public outreach strategies - Jeff Howarth**

J. Howarth recently met with the Town Planner and scheduled a meeting with the Planning Commission on July 29 to confirm a **calendar of steps** leading up to integrating a Conservation Plan with Town Plan. Asked CC for feedback on this potential calendar (to be discussed at PC meeting):

**Sept - Dec 2021** Outreach to share key elements of the Conservation Plan with citizens and obtain their feedback.

**Dec. 2021** - Amendment(s) for the Town Plan to the Planning Commission. This could be a comprehensive Conservation Plan. In addition to descriptions of resources (species, community, landscape levels) and presentation of criteria and results for delineating Forest Blocks and Habitat Corridors in Middlebury, the Conservation Plan should contain evaluation criteria for Town Conservation Fund and include models of strategies for using a conservation fund.

Alternatively, Town Planner has indicated potential interest in a smaller amendment that (1) delineates Forest Blocks (required by Act 171), (2) identifies river corridors and buffer areas (in accordance with Flood Ready Vermont), and (3) provides criteria for siting solar energy projects (Act 174) that are in accord with conservation plan priorities.

**Spring 2022** - Work to integrate Conservation Plan with Town Plan revision.

Regarding outreach activities to take place in Fall 2021, we agreed on the importance of giving citizens, especially owners of large tracts of land, a preview of the Conservation Plan and soliciting their feedback. Four possible forms of outreach were discussed: (1) individual meetings with key landowners, (2) an online meeting open to all, (3) meetings with citizens in sub-regions of Middlebury, and (4) a central town meeting. We prioritized (1) and (2). It is unclear whether (3) will draw many participants --J. Howarth and C. Tate will discuss holding a pilot meeting in the South-Street extension area (W of Otter Ck.) and, depending on the attendance and utility of the pilot meeting, we may consider setting up group meetings with residents in other sectors. We do not plan to hold a central town meeting this fall.

J. Howarth has produced maps of Middlebury's Forest Blocks. These use the same criteria as Forest Blocks by State, but more recent and higher-resolution data. Comparing the maps to the State's layer identified a number of Forest blocks along Quarry Road that are omitted on the State layer. Two forest blocks that the State had identified earlier did not appear when he used the more recent and higher

resolution data. Each of those blocks is currently segmented by a roadway (a gated emergency access road and a private driveway). All identified forest blocks, including the two only delineated by the State, will be presented in the Conservation Plan. Combining the State and new layers shows large gaps between Forest Blocks and the Town's current Forest District Zone. Stream corridors and buffers should serve well as connectors between forest blocks and merit attention for conservation and reclamation. Maps of habitat connectors from road crossings, shrub/grasslands, and agricultural lands were not discussed due to time.

J. Howarth will make a presentation to the Planning Commission on Thursday July 29, 2021. He will request clarity on deliverables, including a template for developing text for amendments to the Town Plan. We agreed that we are comfortable with proposing amendments as a way to put Forest Blocks and Connectors, River Corridors, and criteria for energy siting into the current Town Plan. At the next CC meeting, he will report back from his interactions with the Planning Commission.

**Energy Siting:** J. Howarth and A. L'Roe are working with a Town Energy Sub-Committee on a Preferred Energy Siting map to be included as an Amendment to the Town Plan. The map will display criteria that make certain areas more/less important for conservation, hence less/more desirable for energy siting. The alternative is to use the ACRPC maps [template \(see Known and Possible Constraints, Potential Resource Siting Areas maps\)](#), which would not contribute input from our Conservation Plan. The Commission agreed that identifying "Preferred Areas" was more challenging than just identifying constraints and would require much more discussion, outreach, and work.

Next Meeting:

**Monday, August 23- Noon to 1:30 pm**

A. Sheldon moved to adjourn; J. Howarth seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 1:55 pm.