

TOWN OF MIDDLEBURY CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING
MINUTES

Monday, October 25, 2021
12:00 – 1:30 PM

In-person location: Town Offices, 77 Main Street, Room 116, Middlebury, VT
Or via Zoom

In attendance: A. L’Roe, A. Sheldon, C. Harden, C. Tate, J. Howarth, C. Brooks

12:00 PM – A. L’Roe called the meeting to order

Citizen comments – none

Approval of Minutes – The date for today’s meeting was incorrect in the minutes. C. Harden moved to approve the minutes with that correction; C. Tate seconded. Approval was unanimous.

At the last MCC meeting, J. Murray invited MCC members to the Planning Commission meeting on Nov. 4. Most MCC members plan to attend this important meeting, either in person or via zoom.

Update on conservation plan development by Middlebury College students – J. Howarth reported that the class is going well. Students are using Vermont Conservation Design (<https://vtfishandwildlife.com/conservation/vermont-conservation-design>) as a starting point. All students now have assignments to focus on different components of the plan. They will present their work on December 9, 12:00–1:30 in a joint meeting of the Planning Commission and Conservation Commission.

Flood Resilient Communities Fund (FRCF) and ideas for potential buyouts/easements of flood-vulnerable properties – A. L’Roe noted that federal funds are available to increase flood resilience with actions such as buyouts and streambank restoration. One deadline is Oct. 31 (too soon for MCC); the next round has a January 31, 2022 deadline.

Energy Planning review – MCC will hold off on constraint mapping and preferred area mapping for energy siting until after the College students make their presentations in December. A. L’Roe has roughed out a draft energy plan for the Energy Committee and will share that with MCC.

Several MCC members attended the groundbreaking of the college’s 5-Mw South Street solar farm opening. We learned that the college intends to find ways to make this ~33-acre place a community resource and discussed some potential complications that we see, e.g., too wet for a perimeter hiking trail, danger from hunters’ bullets.

PaleBLUe dot sent A. L’Roe their estimates of solar capacity for rooftop and parking lots. A. L’Roe displayed a map of impervious surfaces that should be helpful in prioritizing solar sites

and re-introduced the RPC map with layers that suggest known constraints and other factors for solar planning.

Other business

1. Bill Roper (Weybridge, VT) is conducting a study focused on grassland (non-forest) species. A. L'Roe will invite him to speak about this at the November MCC meeting.

2. M. Anderson is participating in the Master Naturalist program. Her project involves re-visioning land along a section of Washington St. extension. Because college-owned land in this area, as well as the Saverin property on Rt. 7 have been considered for residential development, MCC members will consider what resources on those parcels would need protection if development occurred, and will weigh, from a conservation perspective, which would be the preferred choice for development.

3. A. Sheldon, A. L'Roe, and C. Tate will attend (virtually) the wildlife planning review session tomorrow at 10 AM by VT ANR, Fish and Wildlife. They will report back at the next MCC meeting on town planning for wildlife.

Adjournment: A. Sheldon moved to adjourn; C. Tate seconded the motion.

November meeting: **Monday, November 22, 2021 - Noon to 1:30pm.**

n.b. December 9th is poster session for GEOG310 students to the PC and CC.