

TOWN OF MIDDLEBURY CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Monday, December 19, 2022

12:00 – 1:30 PM

In Person Location: Middlebury Town Office

Join by Zoom <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81118531167?pwd=T3AwU2tGNUpMUII5bmcxQVkxajAzUT09>

DRAFT MINUTES

A. L'Roe called the meeting to order at 12:05 pm

In attendance -A. L'Roe, C. Tate, M. Anderson, C. Brooks, C. Harden, A. Sheldon, J. Howarth, J. Murray

Minutes from ([November 2022](#)) were approved unanimously.

Citizen Comments and Updates

1. A masterplan for the airport has been drafted. Several copies were circulated and others were available in the foyer of the Town offices. There is a 30-day window for comments. A. L'Roe noted that Ellen Cronin had called his attention to the absence of wellhead source protection in the plan. A. Sheldon will draft a letter of concern from the CC; individual CC members are free to also submit comments.
2. M. Anderson still hopes to arrange a CC visit to Harley Grice's property.
3. Sharon Strassner (citizen) expressed concern about the well-being of the Barnes Brook wetland where Buttolph Drive was extended in the 1980s to connect Buttolph Acres to Washington St. Over time, she has seen invasive phragmites taking over from cattails.

ACRWC discussion about [Barnes Brook watershed](#)

Sophie Johnson, Addison County River Watch Collaborative outreach coordinator, and Matthew Witten, also representing ACRWC, updated the CC on River Watch's activities in the Barnes Brook watershed. The Barnes Brook watershed includes Mary Hogan Elementary School and MUHS. Monitoring for chloride and total phosphate began in 2021, with samples analyzed at the State lab in Randolph. Both Cl and total P exceed state standards, causing Barnes Brook to be classified as an "impaired" stream.

With its Barnes Brook initiative, ACRWC sees opportunities to restore the stream to unimpaired status and to engage and educate the town. They plan to collaborate with 2nd and 4th grade teams at Mary Hogan, the MALT after-school program at Mary Hogan, the Master Naturalist program, and other local groups. UVM Professor Stephanie Hurley will involve her students in designing restoration practices. M. Anderson suggested collaborating with the Hanneford Career Center program.

River Watch will hold a public forum in March, date and place to be determined. A. Sheldon suggested publicizing the initiative and the upcoming forum at a table at Town meeting.

Conservation Plan discussion with J. Murray

As the CC moves forward with conservation planning for Middlebury, it needs to clarify what the best form of the final product should be and what steps will be involved in the process of contributing conservation goals to the Town Plan.

J. Murray reminded us that the Town Plan is to be approved and updated in 2025.

Some discussion focused on whether presenting “bite-sized chunks” of the plan would be preferable to waiting to present a big, comprehensive document. There was agreement that, for purposes of working with the Planning Commission (PC) and addressing the requirements of Acts 171 and 174, iteratively delivering thematic sections would be most effective.

J. Murray pointed out that the PC meets twice each month and that its consideration of ideas and plans typically extends over several meetings. She suggested that the CC should attend some PC meetings in the winter and spring to present the CC plan sections and for both commissions to become better acquainted. Keeping the PC in the loop about the emerging conservation plan will help build trust and allow for timely feedback. She noted that the PC is interested in seeing the Conservation Atlas maps again.

In the end, a conservation plan can be posted on the Town website after approval by the selectboard. Language to be incorporated into the Town Plan goes through the same process: the CC working with the PC, then obtaining public input, then requesting selectboard approval. Several CC members commented that, given the effort involved, it will be important for critical sections of the conservation plan to be incorporated into the Town Plan. C. Brooks

offered to help draft appropriate language to fit the needs of Acts 174 and 171 if such help were requested.

Consistent with the priorities J. Murray had outlined to the CC in 2017, the initial parts to be presented to the PC will most likely be: (1) scenic resources, relevant to Act 174, (2) forest habitat and connectors, relevant to Act 171, (3) a river corridor plan (working from the State corridor plan), and (4) solar siting.

A first-draft plan, subject to change following further consideration of topics and schedules, is:

March 2023 – CC to present current thinking about overall goals and specific maps about scenic areas (Act 174)

April 2023– CC to present the section on Forest Blocks and Wildlife Connectors (Act 171)

May 2023 – CC to present section on river corridors.

Details of joint meetings will be worked out by A. L’Roe and J. Murray. Meanwhile, J. Murray is (as always) welcome to attend CC meetings and to meet with individual CC members as needed outside of the formal meetings.

Sustainable Development at the local level

M. Anderson hopes to have her Spring 2023 Middlebury College students engage with community groups to explore what sustainable development (i.e., related to the U.N.’s Sustainable Development Goals [<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>]) will look like at the local level here Vermont. She invited suggestions from CC members of community groups the students might work with, beginning in February. She introduced the concept of “Transition Towns,” towns (including Charlotte, VT) involved in a global network of communities envisioning being more resilient and socially just in a future less dependent on fossil fuels.

A. L’Roe adjourned the meeting at 1:40 pm

Next monthly meeting- Monday January 23, 2023 (NEW TIME: starting at 1pm)