

TOWN OF MIDDLEBURY CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Monday, September 26, 2022

12:00 – 1:30 PM

In Person Location: Middlebury Town Office

Join by Zoom <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81130954251?pwd=Z3VBYVp5OXZmbFNtbkZDVXV3cE1yQT09>

MINUTES [Approved on 11/28/2022]

Call to Order

A. L'Roe called the meeting to order at 12:13 pm.

In attendance: A. L-Roe, J. Howarth, C. Harden, C. Tate, C. Brooks, and Barbara Greenwalt (visitor)

The minutes from the [August 2022](#) meeting were approved unanimously.

Citizen Comments and Updates

1. B. Greenwalt serves on the board of Eddy Farm, which is developing a plan for its land. J. Howarth noted that the College, with lands neighboring Eddy Farm, is in very early stages of doing a management plan for its land and suggested that these neighbors coordinate their planning efforts.
2. Hanneford Career Center will host an event about Bats on Wed. Oct. 26, 6:00–7:00 pm, with Alyssa Bennett, from VT Fish and Wildlife, to provide information.
3. Middlebury College will designate a tract of its land between the railroad and Otter Creek, near the MALT footbridge, as the Steve Trombulak Bird Sanctuary and formalize this new designation on Oct. 25 (4:30 pm) at the Hillcrest Orchard on campus.

Middlebury Local Hazard Mitigation Plan and Hazard rankings and feedback

A. L'Roe is involved in updating the town's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. The current plan is posted on the Town website. We briefly reviewed the hazard categories. L'Roe welcomes further feedback on the prioritization of these natural hazards and will keep MCC informed as the new report takes shape.

Conservation Plan

J. Howarth used slides to illustrate differences between three conservation maps for Middlebury: the VT Conservation Design map, the map made by Arrowwood for Middlebury, and the map he has developed. [Link to conservation plan slides](#)

Given these differences, a key role for the Conservation Commission (MCC) is to identify objective criteria to guide the town in conservation-related decision making. The VT Conservation Design map lacks the fine-tuning detail of the Howarth map but, similarly, shows lowlands and riparian places as potential habitat connectors. The Arrowwood map does not show lowland/riparian areas as a landscape element. Evidently, Arrowwood designated habitat connectors simply as those with the shortest distance between forested sites, even though those connections in some cases contain roads and homes.

Seeing the differences between three maps designed for conservation in Middlebury underscored the need for MCC to formally agree on a set of criteria to use in decision-making about which map, among these and future maps, the Town should use.

After a short discussion, the MCC voted, unanimously among those present, to accept the draft of conservation goals shown on the seventh slide (see link above). By this action, we set the goal of protecting and restoring 30% of land in the town for forested natural communities by 2030 and officially adopted three additional criteria for evaluating conservation decisions: connectedness, representativeness, and rarity. Representativeness aims to protect and/or restore natural communities in proportion to their abundance the time of the town's founding. Resiliency was raised as a possible criterion but not added to this group. Because resiliency is the broader goal that these four criteria aim to achieve, it will appear earlier in the narrative.

By the October meeting, J. Howarth expects to wrap up his analyses and share the draft that connects to these four criteria.

Homework for MCC members is to suggest, and draft language for, other criteria that should be used to guide conservation decisions. One example might be protecting deer wintering areas. These will be discussed and voted on at the next meeting.

Next monthly meeting planned for Monday, October 31, 2022, 12:00–1:30.

An attempt to identify a date that fit the schedules of all commission members was initially unsuccessful. A. L'Roe will circulate an online poll to try again to identify an alternate date/time. [*Note: the commission did not meet in October.*]

Adjournment

A. L'Roe adjourned the meeting at 1:35 pm following unanimous vote.