

TOWN OF MIDDLEBURY CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Monday, May 4, 2020

12:00 – 1:00 PM

Join by Web <https://middlebury.zoom.us/j/92446181182>

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Minutes

(Approved May 18, 2020)

Jeff Howarth, Andrew L’Roe, Amy Sheldon Judy Wiger-Grohs, Monica Pryzperhart,
Guest: Leslie Kameny

I. Call to Order

II. Public Comments

- (1) L. Kameny- what is the current status of South St. solar project? Neighbors haven’t heard anything, no signs up, no communications with the company. The commission has not heard anything. J. Howarth- the college has calendar of decision-making available that might be worth checking (<https://www.middlebury.edu/office/announcements/decision-making-calendar>).
- (2) [A. L’Roe heard from ACRPC director Adam Lougee that as far as he knows the project is still on and Encore is likely filing paperwork with Public Utilities Commission soon (if they haven’t already)]

III. Approval of minutes

[February 2020](#)

- (1) M. Pryzperhart.- motioned to approve, J. Wiger-Grohs- seconded, Approved by all those present (A. Sheldon abstained)

IV. Commission member updates

- (1) Wetland Classification (Andrew L'Roe)

- (a) L'Roe noted that the reclassification proposal is a bit on hold- several members of steering committee had a conversation with representatives from the Fish and Wildlife and Wetlands programs (John Austin, Eric Sorenson, Zapata Courage, Laura LaPierre)- they pushed back against using natural community type boundaries, thought it would be good to focus on a single contiguous piece- group agreed that would probably be the Cornwall Swamp area- either north of Swamp Road, or including the portion south to Whiting. They thought it would be good to accompany with more education and outreach, both to landowners in that area and the general public to build support.
- (b) L'Roe will reach out to organize a Zoom conversation with Wetlands Steering Committee

- (2) Creek Road (Judy Wiger-Grohs)

- (a) The last infrastructure meeting was cancelled, in the prior meeting there was no discussion about Creek Road Task Force continuing work. J. Wiger-Grohs- it would be useful to write something for Selectboard to propose adding a conservation representative on the Creek Road Task Force. There is currently no one on the task force with experience about natural resource conservation or river dynamics. Current proposals appear to be to repair and open the road to traffic or reclassify as Type 4 road and keep it closed, but it's unclear where that process stands.
- (b) J. Howarth can help draft letter and show to CC by next meeting (May 18/June 1)

- (3) Conservation Commission member terms (Jeff Howarth)

- (a) Terms expiring this year (March)- M. Pryzperhart, J. Howarth, M. Anderson. Some members received a note about extending their term by 90 days. Anyone currently on the Conservation Commission has option of staying on- just let J. Howarth know. It's unclear whether the Commission would be able to suggest replacements or the responsibility would go to the Selectboard to advertise and

select (probably both approaches would be possible). J. Howarth will likely stay on for another term

(4) Association of Conservation Commissions (Jeff Howarth)

- (a) J. Howarth spoke with J. Murray (Middlebury Director of Planning and Zoning) who said that she was comfortable with the town covering (\$50)- conservation budget is currently committed to Arrowwood wetland project for a couple more years (3 years contract), but the town hasn't received any reporting from them that we know of yet. J. Wiger-Grohs stated that the word will go out in ~September for committees/commissions to put together a budget proposal for the following year, the Conservation Commission should think ahead about planning out needs for funding for projects before then. She will keep an eye out for the announcement and let the commission know when it goes out.

(5) Town Forest Planning (Jeff Howarth)

- (a) There is interest in creating specific plans for town forest properties- tasks would include deed research and on-the-ground research (A. Sheldon points out that the Middlebury Area Land Trust should have all deeds and property documentation). Inquiries are being made through UVM Master Naturalist project. Not clear when Middlebury College students will be returning and could be involved. A. Sheldon- it would be good for the Conservation Commission to be involved in leadership way- there is a lot of existing information, and it would be unfortunate to duplicate efforts that are already known or being done by MALT, Trustees, etc. M. Pryzperhart- we need to clarify what the town wants- is it focused primarily on forest management, recreation, etc.? Leslie - There is a webinar on managing town forests coming up, and a "toolkit" available through VT Urban and Community Forestry (<https://vtcommunityforestry.org/places/town-forests/recreation-planning-initiative>)
- (b) J. Howarth- will inquire about scope and timing of project. As part of overall conservation plan, propose focusing on Forest Blocks/Town Forests, wetlands, water as part of initial sections.

V. Discussion: Conservation Plan

- (1) J. Howarth discussed the overall vision for the plan- starting with inventory, education, coming uses, targeting properties for Conservation, not just focusing on acquisition. J. Howarth can access College files and could put together story maps with information. He could work towards an interactive parcel map that could pull up conservation values and other information- it might be a bit like the [ANR Atlas](#) but easier to use and focused on Middlebury-. A. L'Roe- would it be possible to create a library of information about existing resources and Middlebury's Conservation efforts? J.Howarth- yes, but it might be challenging to search- would have to decide whether it would be organized geographically (with interactive maps), or by subject?
- (2) L'Roe proposed starting with the 2013 Middlebury Conservation Plan and updating the existing chapters with new information and trends in order to get momentum and get something ready for the town- then moving on to broader visioning and future needs in face of climate change, anticipated development and population changes, adaption and restoration, etc. A.Sheldon- endorsed the section by section approach.
- (3) J. Howarth suggested that the best approach might be for everyone to read chapters from 1988 Land Protection Study (MAL T 88) and A. Sheldon's Conservation Plan (2013) in order to revise one chapter at a time- CC members will read, separately add notes, and discuss at the next meeting. A lead person will compile after meeting while members proceed to next section J. Howarth proposed starting with the **Water section**, other commission members agreed. J. Howarth will set up Conservation Plan folder with document to add notes and links to 3 reference documents-
 - [Land Protection Study of Middlebury \(1988\)](#) (MAL T 88),
 - [Middlebury Conservation Plan](#) (2013, A. Sheldon and Class)
 - [Middlebury Town Plan](#) (12/2017)+ a new link to the [Midd CP Inventory](#) to update along with chapter
- (4) The Commission members will start with the "Water" section- Next topic and point person will be identified at next meeting (J. Howarth suggested next topic may be Recreation)

VI. Set Next Agenda & Meeting Date

Meeting set for **May 18, 2020**

Motion to Adjourn: A. L'Roe, Second: A. Sheldon, All approved