

# Conservation Commission Meeting

## MINUTES

APRIL 16, 2018

4:05PM – 5:39PM

MIDDLEBURY TOWN OFFICES SMALL  
MEETING ROOM

MEETING CALLED BY	Monica Przyperhart
TYPE OF MEETING	Monthly Meeting
FACILITATOR	Jennifer Murray
NOTE TAKER	Kemi Fuentes-George, Molly Anderson
TIMEKEEPER	Jennifer Murray
ATTENDEES	Jennifer Murray, Monica Przyperhart, Andrew L'Roe, Kemi Fuentes-George, Jeff Howarth, Molly Anderson, Kathleen Ramsay, Amy Sheldon

### Agenda topics

4:04 – 4:15

#### REPORT ON MEETING OF REGIONAL CONSERVATION COMMISSIONS

DISCUSSION
<p>The meeting was called to order at 4:04pm. The first part of the meeting focused on a report on a group meeting of conservation commissions from the region – various towns, including Ripton. Activities:</p> <p>Among the participants from other conservation commissions was Mark Nelson from Ripton and a “nice contingent” including Zapata Courage from also Ripton, and Laura Ferrell from a regional group (Monkton); a co-organizer of the group meeting.</p> <p>The meeting had, among other things, placing color coded sticky notes on various maps indicating: research projects; outreach; science and inventory; education. This functioned as a mapping project showing what different research conservation commissions, some of which have been around for over 20 years, have done. Achievements include 1) getting people involved in conservations; 2) giving new residents trifold on what the natural resources are, and how to learn about them; 3) may have had warnings about what to do.</p> <p>Salisbury was also impressive – working on identifying town forest: for example, using a dump in the center of town to contact residents for community outreach. Tracked bobcat with collar tracking to show how bobcats have used hedgerows as wildlife corridors. In Ferrisburg, this led to adoption of hedgerow projects. Could be used to help wildlife in Middlebury.</p> <p>Molly Anderson, who had attended on the Middlebury CC behalf stated: “As the fledgling group... the first thing is to get to know the community. Several towns looked at us, and said ‘that’s how you need to start.’” A group starting to organize another meeting next Fall.</p>

4:15 – 4:26

#### PRESENTATION ON NEXT STEPS IN NR INVENTORY AND VERNAL POOLS IN MIDDLEBURY BY ANDREW L'ROE

DISCUSSION
<p>Andrew L'Roe presented on one piece of wetlands management – working on inventory. Started with vernal pools – as temporary bodies of water, Andrew L'Roe noted there are “some challenges in mapping them... unless you’re familiar with tiny vertebrates in the soil.” Include serving as habitats for salamanders, frogs, etc. Not usually connected to other wetlands.</p> <p>One potential pool has been mapped in East Middlebury. Information is available on mapping done under 2001 Middlebury Wetland Project by Springston on Vermont Natural Resources Atlas.</p> <p>Another mapping done using LiDAR from UVM (Sean McFaden provided GIS layer). This captured 61% of known vernal pools. These are “some different places that we could check... If we are talking about hiring a consultant, we could hand this data off.” Other possibilities include hiring students for field verification, doing it ourselves. Things of concern – some of it is on private land. VT Fish and Wildlife Dept. asks for form to be filled out.</p> <p>Jen: “I only have \$3,000 this year, and if we carry it out in phases, we could hack away at it.” We could do “some site specific evaluations this first year.”</p> <p>Monica: “There’s a training happening on VT Ecostudies... in Manchester, VT.”</p>

Jen: "Let's confer internally and figure out how to advance this as a next step... We might find that you want different subcommittees to deal with different components."

4:26 – 4:33

JEFF REPORT ON SCENIC VIEWS PROJECT

DISCUSSION

Jeff: If I'm going to be tackling this over the summer. "A first step might be to identify where in Midd you can see the mountains... looking at what's in Midd as the foreground." "Where in Midd you can see mountains that are not in Midd." These places, despite being out of the town, contribute to the scenic values of living in Middlebury. Jeff stated: "I'm on leave in the Fall." He noted that he has modest expectations about what can be accomplished at this time. Some concerns – if you put a map with all the scenic values online, it could serve as a tool for real estate investors to buy up parcels in Middlebury. It will be slow, and probably at the same pace as the CVM.

CONCLUSIONS

We should plan on hiring a consultant for an environmental/natural resource survey, particularly of forested areas for a potential set of recommendations. We are going to add discussions on what we say to the consultant about framing on future agendas.

4:33 – 5:01

REPORT BY JEN ON CASE STUDY IN  
CHITTENDEN COUNTY: "FROM SCIENCE TO  
POLICY TO ACTION: USING DATA TO CREATE  
POLICIES THAT PROTECT HABITAT AND  
RESOURCES"

DISCUSSION

Jen Murray highlighted a four town collaborative between Jericho, Bolton, Huntington, (and 1 other) in Chittenden County. Objectives were to do 4 town NR inventory; education & community outreach to "let them know why these values are important." Products included:

- NR/Wildlife habitat inventory map
- Draft bylaws
- General sustainability goals

These towns had previously partnered on regional project on Winooski River Basin and watershed level work. Recommended that if we conduct a similar project, we do a "Walks and Talks Series." This 4 town project hired Arrowwood to do Inventory. Although this "sounds simple," Jen Murray noted that it took "several years" to go from start of surveying, etc., to final projects. Posters and lectures, e.g., by Sue Morse. Photo of CVM of Mad River, with circled areas.

Summary of process" included 1) air mapping e.g., LiDAR; 2) using existing sources, e.g. VTFW; 3) community input; 4) field investigation. Jen Murray stated that with these steps, "That actually engaged the landowners too, and that gave [the conservation committion] the opportunity to give them a little schtick" on recommendations of good land management practices. Maps included potential wildlife corridors. In Jericho "conservation commission goes out in the winter time and looks at footprints... so we could do something like that." Uses:

Before and after map showing how new data added a wealth of information about existing NR, of clear use to town planning.

- Zoning districts
- Trail policies

With this information, Jen Murray noted: "We might limit the length of an interior access road... prohibit the length of roads in certain areas... maybe people can't convert trails or forest roads into legitimate roads... Obviously it's the PC that creates those policies," but we could give recommendations, nevertheless.

This combined with overlay from Arrowwood → tiered ecological priorities map. In explaining the value of such a tiered map, Jen Murray stated: "So this gives you a level of comfort that what you're trying to protect is what people actually value." Primary conservation area things you "absolutely have to protect." Next slide showed map of things mapped – vernal pools, wetlands, rivers.

Monica: "some of this information (in Midd) is state-level data... and it's not as good." Since some difference between needs across towns, "I would get Arrowwood to give a presentation" (Jen) which would help identify data gaps in Middlebury. Jen: "Act 171... requires us to update our information."

Monica: "not all towns end up with regulatory changes." Toolbox includes "regulatory and non-regulatory things... the end goal is that, once you know the science and you know the people, then you can come up with the next step [for moving forward] with what's best for Midd."

Monica: "Even though" we might want regulatory changes, "that might not be what's wanted by the community." Need to get buy-in. Jeff pointed out that could be useful in pointing out how to structure outreach and information.

Andrew: "does it make sense" to get involved with Ripton? E.g., Ripton matters for Midd scenic views.

Monica: "In a long term project like this... Ripton is a very different place than Midd." Natural forest, in the mountains. Similarly for Cornwall. Doesn't see a large project like the one in Chit County, working in Addison at this time. Weybridge doesn't have a CC. Some of the Walk and Talks might make sense.

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5:01 – 5:22

CVM AND OUTREACH PLAN

<b>DISCUSSION</b>	
<p>REMINDER: we had pledged we would do this in the fall. Here, proposed getting an outline for how to set this up. Given presentation on outreach and walks and talks.</p> <p>Andrew: some concerns about taking it on, since we might not match CVM with “what’s there.” Kemi: what kind of technical knowledge did CC members have to have, if we were to engage in the Walks and Talks? Jen and Monica: could hire consultants and outside experts to fill in gaps</p> <p>Kemi and Monica suggested that they could take the possible lead on publicity and outreach, although Kemi noted that he would be unlikely to have time to dedicate to such an effort until the semester was over. Jeff: could “combine [CVM and outreach] through Walk and Talks, e.g., using maps in the field and asking community members about what they value. Andrew: Wright Park.</p>	
<b>CONCLUSIONS</b>	
<p>Might push CVM back to October, which would allow another Walk and Talk in September for a total of 4.</p>	

<b>OBSERVERS</b>	No members of the public were present
<b>ADJOURNMENT</b>	The meeting was adjourned at 5:39pm