

Town of Middlebury Conservation Commission
Rotary Small Meeting Room, First Floor
77 Main Street, Municipal Offices
Minutes of July 16, 2018
Draft

Members Present: Monica Przyperhart, Judy Wiger-Grohs, Andrew L’Roe, Kemi Fuentes-George, Molly Anderson

Members Absent: Jeff Howarth, Amy Sheldon

Staff Present: Jennifer Murray

Others Present: none

1. Call to Order: Meeting began 4:00 pm.

2. Minutes:

Minutes from 5/21 were tabled; not enough members from that meeting present to approve minutes. Meeting in June was canceled.

3. Member updates:

In organizing the first two walks and talks lectures, Monica spoke with the directors of MALT and VT Audubon. They discussed partnering in the future and avoiding overlap. We should include MALT in future updates and coordinate calendars. Molly agrees it would be to our benefit to co-sponsor things going forward.

4. Discussion about Walks & Talks Series:

June event: Kemi asked how the bird walk event (June) went. Monica said she counted approx. 35 attendees, including families, students and others. FPF and Addison Independent were the ways most people reported finding out about the event. Molly said some people she spoke to on the walk expressed an interest in trees (even street trees in downtown) and herpatology as subjects for future events. Kemi suggested reaching out to Jim Andrews (salamander and snake expert from Salisbury), or Otter Creek Audubon.

July event: Judy provided an overview of the July walk, “Shirts and Shortcakes”, being planned for 5-6pm Tues 7/24. Monica invited anyone interested to meet her and Jamie Montague from MALT (who is leading a naturalist hike as part of the event) at 3pm Friday for a dry run. Discussed where to hang posters- pick up printed posters from Jen’s office, and Monica will create a list of kid-friendly posting locations.

August event: In May, Amy had offered to organize an August event with a forest-themed topic in East Middlebury. Kemi offered to follow up with Amy to confirm that is still a go. The group discussed a fallback plan in case Amy’s event does not come together in time. One idea would be to work with the tree committee to do a simple walking tour of trees in downtown, including tree identification and discussion of emerald ash borer.

September event: Andrew is moving ahead with Jeff to plan that event, taking place on Chipman Hill. He asked if it is a concern that it may be a more strenuous hike, and the group agreed that it should be advertised that way, but that it likely won’t adversely affect attendance.

40 General (all events): Judy offered to do the Front Porch Forum posting, Addison Independent
41 advertisement, and town website announcements for all events- send her required info.
42 Kemi will continue to create posters- please send him info as it is available. Jen can print
43 posters.

44 Future planning of series: Group decided to evaluate at the end of the summer, but the plan
45 for now is to put the series on hold after the September event, to allow everyone to focus on
46 Community Values Mapping. There was general consensus to resume these events next year.
47 Judy recommended a Spring herp walk.
48

49 **5. Member Updates (Pt. 2)**

50 Molly met with Laura Farrell of the Monkton Conservation Commission, who she had met at
51 the Association of Conservation Commissions. Monkton is working on developing a grant
52 application due at the end of September targeted at landscape-level forest management
53 projects. Monkton proposes to apply for \$50,000 to complete an assessment of Northern
54 Addison County Wildlife Corridors, and had asked if we would like to partner with them.
55 Molly suggested we could enlist environmental studies students from Middlebury College,
56 who may be able to create a J-Term project from some portion of the scope. The proposal is
57 not out yet, but will be due quickly in September. Kemi shared some observations on why
58 this type of work is important, and also pointed out that once you map these corridors you
59 have to turn it into something. Jen said it sounds like an interesting project, and wildlife
60 corridors are definitely part of the Act 171 mandate they will be working on next summer
61 following the Community Values Mapping, but it does sound like Monkton is a year or two
62 ahead of us in their process. Kemi is right that the wildlife corridors would have value as
63 town plan language and possibly form the basis of future changes to our local regulations. As
64 such, it's important to take our time and make sure we've laid the right groundwork with our
65 events and community values mapping, engaging the community in the process correctly.
66 Monica agreed that it is essential not to rush the implementation piece, and give the public
67 time to warm up to the mapping. She recommends we should be cautious to take the right
68 steps and make sure it unfolds the way the community sees it unfolding. Jennifer agreed that
69 we would really want to see what their proposal looks like and evaluate if we are at that point
70 in our town. Monica said it sounds like there is some cautious support, and asked if Laura
71 was writing the grant application. Molly said yes, she is writing it and will keep us in the loop.
72

73 Monica reminded the group about emailing and the open meetings law. The law requires
74 that decisions of the group must be made in an open meeting. Our group emails must remain
75 related to creating the agenda and hashing out items for the agenda, and all other email
76 logistics should be kept among just the few members working together to organize events,
77 etc. Subcommittee emails are okay. Please continue to copy Jen and Monica on your emails,
78 but avoid copying the whole group. We'll catch up on updates as a group at the next
79 scheduled meeting.
80

81 Jennifer said a contract with Arrowwood Environmental was approved by the Selectboard for
82 natural resources inventory work spread out over the next 5 years. She can provide the
83 group with updates on that work as it progresses.
84

85 **6. Discussion about Community Values Mapping:**

86 The group discussed various ways of gathering public input: Molly remembers that we were
87 discussing an event in October, possibly in different places. Andrew liked the online input
88 people were able to provide for the forest planning project. Monica thinks online input could
89 be complex for a project like this, where we want spatial information. Jennifer thought about
90 having a couple poster boards for people to mark up at town hall and MUMS, but then you
91 wouldn't have the benefit of explaining the exercise. Molly thinks it is probably pretty self-
92 evident. Monica observed that participating using points or dots (like stickers) provides
93 different feedback than drawing shapes. Molly asked- couldn't the dots tell us something?
94 Dots could give you a heat map.. drawing a shape is hard to get your mind around. Kemi
95 thinks there is no perfect way.. he has a slight preference for drawing shapes instead of dots,
96 as people who want to plot a dot where there already is one, may plot is beside that creating
97 more data skew over time.

98
99 Jennifer suggested an attended board could be good- maybe a couple of us could bring the
100 board to the Farmer's Market or a school? Andrew agreed it is better to have someone
101 there- especially in a school. Judy supports a lot of different places so they can survey a lot of
102 different people and not have a narrow survey. Molly said if we are going to a lot of different
103 places, she is inclined to make it as simple/self-explanatory as possible. Monica suggested
104 throughout the fall, we could each go to a different event. Judy suggested we could send
105 postcards as an invitation to the event(s).

106
107 Monica shared that one thing she really values about these events are the conversations that
108 come up when you get a variety of participants in the same place at the same time. Several
109 agreed that was a good point. The conversation turned to brainstorming about ways to get a
110 diverse crowd to one place at one time. Perhaps after the main event, we could see if we
111 wanted to branch out for additional input. Molly summarized the discussion- so we talk
112 about outcomes, we let people know about it, and spark conversations.

113
114 The Conservation Commission talked about what would encourage attendance. Could we
115 have a nature photographer there to display their work? Could we have other environmental
116 organizations attend and reach out to their membership? We should have food! We should
117 make sure there are comfortable surroundings. Jennifer said the basement of the
118 Congregational Church was very comfortable. Several members thought it would be good to
119 vary the location away from the municipal town offices. Members thought a Doodle Poll
120 could be one way to narrow down preferences.

121
122 Next meeting: narrow down a location for the main event.

123 Next meeting: add agenda item to review the Tree Committee's draft tree policy

124
125 **7. Adjournment:** Adjourn at 5:30 PM, meeting concluded.

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128 Submitted by: Jennifer Murray