

Conservation Commission Regular Meeting

MINUTES

MARCH 12, 2018

4:07PM – 5:05PM

MIDDLEBURY TOWN OFFICES SMALL MEETING ROOM

MEETING CALLED BY	Monica
TYPE OF MEETING	Monthly Meeting of the Middlebury Conservation Commission
FACILITATOR	Monica Przyperhart
NOTE TAKER	Kemi Fuentes-George
TIMEKEEPER	Monica
ATTENDEES	Monica Przyperhart, Kemi Fuentes-George, Judy Wiger-Grohs, Jeff Howarth, Andrew L'Roe, Jennifer Murray, Molly Anderson

Agenda topics

4:07 – 4:29PM

DISCUSSION ON PLANNING COMMISSION'S SCHEDULED UPDATE FOR THE TOWN PLAN

DISCUSSION
<p>The meeting was called to order at 4:07pm. Jennifer Murray opened with a presentation on the work of the Planning Commission (PC). This presentation was intended to highlight specific areas of contribution for the Conservation Commission. The work of the PC is organized into three different task groups. These included: Task Group 1, the town plan, Task Group 2, zoning regulations & zoning map; Task Group 3, which works on town planning projects. Currently, the PC recently completed a town plan update and may complete another as soon as 2021/2022 with engagement by the citizenry. Their current tasks involve collection and analysis of data prior to any future update. The PC was asked to provide this list of future planning items in order to inform the Selectboard's future planning discussion in April.</p> <p>Jennifer showed a flowchart of the process for updating a Town Plan. A town plan update is not required until 2025. Phase 1 surveys the existing conditions; Phase 2 comprises community outreach; and Phase 3 consists Strategic Planning activities for the Town Plan. As a proper collection & analysis of background data hasn't been done in a while, they are focusing for the time being on data collection and analysis, which precedes Phase 1. It is in these data gaps that the Conservation Commission (CC) can comply with its mandate. The Planning Commission is currently analyzing growth trends and land use data- staff hopes the conservation commission can focus on natural resources data gaps at the same time. Most importantly for the CC are the natural resources data gaps: For example, the PC needs updated wetland inventories & inventories of vernal pools; primary, secondary, tertiary protection areas; wildlife corridors & crossings, all of which will also depend on field verification. Also included in the list of natural resources data gaps are: viewshed/scenic resources mapping, and community values mapping.</p> <p>Jeff Howarth asked the question: in the CC's contribution to the Town Plan update, should we include studies of historic & working landscapes in the natural resources data gaps, or keep them separate? Jennifer Murray responded that she had initially been thinking about keeping them separate. Still, perhaps after implementing the initial building blocks of the Town Plan, which focus primarily on natural resources, we might expand mandate.</p> <p>Monica Przyperhart asked: how would our ongoing work on the community values mapping (CVM) fit with the Town Plan Update projects? Jennifer Murray responded that the goals of the CVM would probably overlap significantly w/ the projected natural resources data gap, but the CVM would probably not overlap much with the planning commission's land use planning. This is due in part to the fact that development planning is at the point where the Planning Commission needs answers for questions that are much more specific. The Planning Commission has already identified what people are interested in at a larger scale- now their outreach will attempt to refine a more specific vision.</p> <p>Monica Przyperhart asked: and how would the CVM be used in planning? Jennifer Murray responded that the CVM work will show us generally what areas people value- in effect, areas the public would support protecting. Subsequently, we can use existing data available from Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) to create a heat map showing sensitive habitat areas that scientifically we think we should be protecting. By comparing the two, you can begin to define areas that overlap. This gives you a sense of what areas people would be willing to accept additional regulatory protection for. In the end, this information would assist us if we think of creating some additional regulations for protection of important habitat areas- e.g., on length of driveways. At present, we have some zoning protections for natural resources but we could be doing more.</p>

DISCUSSION	
<p>Monica Przyperhart noted that Middlebury is bigger than several of the communities in Vermont that have done CVM and natural resources studies in the past. As a result, we might consider focusing on smaller pieces of those needs, given our size as a body relative to the scope of the information needed. Notably, we can find out without community input, where important ecological resources are. That might be best as a first step for the CC.</p> <p>Jeff Howarth stated that he would work on scenic values separately while others worked on the CVM</p> <p>By consensus, the CC agreed to begin planning for a CVM. We agreed that the first step for the CVM is to figure out an appropriate timeframe & effective methodology for tracking community values. Some of the important issues include: How do we plan to invite people & organize meetings for community input? This is crucial, particularly if we hope to get as representative a sample of the Middlebury population. Inadequate sampling could lead to over- or under-representation of important uses in key sectors of the population. In terms of timeframe, Monica Przyperhart stated that it should be done either in the Spring or Fall. The Summer is unlikely to work as an effective sampling time, given the likelihood of travel among the Middlebury population.</p> <p>On one hand, there is a need to get information done sooner than later, which would suggest a Spring launch a most appropriate; on the other hand, we need to get the methodology done right. It is unlikely that we could start in March and have a proper methodology completed for Spring 2018. As a result, we agreed to work on developing proper methodology during Spring & Summer and develop as effective a sampling methodology and questionnaire as possible.</p> <p>Molly Anderson noted that in sampling, we might think of choosing locations according to geographical regions, rather than focusing on interest groups (hunters, etc.)</p> <p>Some of the areas that were recommended as possible sampling/outreach sites included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Middlebury public schools and the school gym • The Sarah Partridge Library in East Middlebury • The Ilsley Public Library basement • The dog park • Quarry Hill School • Congregational Church meeting room • Valley View Drive- Church of JC of the Latter Day Saints • Municipal Office Building • The condos in Battell Woods • The retirement homes near Helen Porter (Eastview) • Helen Porter itself • HOPE • The Legion Building • The community house on Case Street, near Lindale Mobile Home Park <p>Through group discussion, the MCC tried to identify what areas of town might allow them to engage underserved populations. Jeff mentioned that you could potentially use property value maps in conjunction w/ census data on Middlebury to get roughly representative sample of low-income areas and plan sites for outreach.</p>	

CONCLUSIONS	
<p>We set a tentative target of having this work completed by September 2018. In the interim, we will work on going over suggested locations; develop methodology on drafting invitations for best outreach efforts. Will send out reminders of assignments a week in advance. Andrew reported that he would follow up on the wetlands data.</p>	

DISCUSSION	
<p>The minutes of the February 26th meeting were approved at 5:06pm.</p>	

DISCUSSION	
<p>There was no other business.</p>	

OBSERVERS	No members of the public were present
ADJOURNMENT	The meeting was adjourned at 5:06pm.