

**Town of Middlebury Conservation Commission**  
**Rotary Small Meeting Room, First Floor**  
**77 Main Street, Municipal Offices**  
**Minutes of November 19, 2018**  
**Draft**

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**Members Present:** Monica Przyperhart, Judy Wiger-Grohs, Andrew L’Roe, Molly Anderson, Jeff Howarth, Amy Sheldon, Kemi Fuentes-George

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**Members Absent:**

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**Staff Present:** Jennifer Murray

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**Others Present:**

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

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9 **2. Minutes:**

10 On a motion by Monica, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Molly, the Conservation Commission approved the minutes  
11 from 8/20/18 as presented. Motion passed 4-0, Kemi, Amy, Jeff abstaining.

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13 On a motion by Judy, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Andrew, the Conservation Commission approved the minutes  
14 from 10/15/18 as presented. Motion passed 5-0, Kemi and Molly abstaining.

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16 **3. Updates:**

17 -Monica notified the group about the upcoming Cornwall Swamp meeting.

18 -Community Values Mapping- per the Doodle Poll they have decided on Sunday 1/13/18 (3-  
19 5pm) and Monday 1/7/18 (5-7pm). Jen requested that she check room availability with Beth  
20 Dow.

21 -Addison County River Watch Collaborative spoke with Monica and wants to come give a talk-  
22 do they want to that as a winter walk and talk?

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24 **4. Organizational Discussion:**

25 Monica announced that she would be taking the role of timekeeper for their meeting.

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27 Monica facilitated a general discussion about what people want from their experience as  
28 conservation commission volunteers. Questions suggested by the group last time were used  
29 to frame the discussion.

30  
31 *1. What prompted you to volunteer/ why are we here (individual interests)*

32 Judy- she has seen encroachment on the land, especially in East Middlebury. She is  
33 interested in conservation and preservation

34 Andrew- He’s a MALT volunteer interested in the recreational aspects of those areas. He  
35 wants to help with town plans, contribute information and knowledge, weigh-in on projects.  
36 He has knowledge in forestry and wildlife, especially herp species.

37 Monica- is devoted to the personally and professionally. She’s very interested in ecology and  
38 glad the group formed.

39 Amy- Same as others. Conservation fund- hopes we start prioritizing and protecting valuable  
40 resources and create a conservation plan. Battell legacy- build upon that.

41 Kemi- He is curious about the communication between conservationists and non-  
42 conservationists. He has seen how people have communicated in other places, and wants to  
43 bring that to bear here.

44 Molly- Is an ecologist. Working on food systems now. Interested in farmland being  
45 conserved here. Knowledge of ecology to serve town, meet others. Wildlife habitat, invasive  
46 plants, land conservation, preserving natural beauty.

47 Jeff- Has been in New Jersey/California- possible futures. Has been a resident 10 years. Is a  
48 professor of cartography- how do individual decisions aggregate into landscapes that may not  
49 be desirable- so that's why he's involved.

50

51 *2. What do you think the conservation commission should be doing?*

52 Amy- identify lands for conservation; work on that. Identify resource areas, help DRB review  
53 development that could affect them, work on town plan updates, get us on the same page.

54 Jeff- housing density map. How does that line up with zoning? I think it has something to do  
55 with zoning... I think it has something to do with conservation. Focusing on specific things will  
56 not get us there.

57 Judy- Public input so we're not having people feel like we're telling them what to do. Improve  
58 collaboration between various groups.

59 Monica- Different for every town, but she thinks three things make them work well- 1) their  
60 work is linked to the rest of the town's work, 2) each member brings their own passions and  
61 interests to the table, 3) coordinate with other groups, understand their role- to be  
62 collaborative. Interested in outreach/education, citizen science and open space plan.

63 Andrew- interested in not becoming New Jersey, setting some of the foundations so there's  
64 knowledge up front.

65 Molly- Is putting together a map in her mind of who does what. We have to figure out what  
66 conservation problem is worst. How do we protect working landscapes? She is interested in  
67 working on open space conservation and influencing legislation to protect small  
68 farms/incubator.

69 Kemi- Like Andrew, would like to have a voice in planning and balancing the need to have  
70 growth versus stagnation. Wants to see less stress on the land- and the most long term  
71 viability. Inventory, classification and contributing to the zoning regulations.

72 Jeff- There are new houses on Sheep Farm Road. There are new houses being built- it is  
73 happening. Sees a big role for the conservation commission. Did the past create what we  
74 want? Will it contribute to the future you want?

75

76 *What are the roles of conservation commission members and staff?*

77 Jennifer explained the roles and responsibilities of conservation commission volunteers and  
78 staff, as defined by the plan approved by the Selectboard when the conservation commission  
79 was created. Several members of the group expressed that they would prefer to select their  
80 own tasks and design their own approaches to those tasks, rather than staff developing  
81 material between meetings for discussion and feedback.

82

83 Jennifer re-explained the approach she presented to the group last year. In her mind, the  
84 conservation commission would take some time developing capacity and learning to work  
85 together by tackling some of the tasks on the 5-year work plan before bringing in new items.  
86 Staff would be there to provide a leadership role in guiding those projects along. After that,  
87 as they grow as a group, they could start to take on items of their own. This seemed to her to  
88 be an appropriate solution since they only meet once per month and are still learning how to  
89 work as a group.

90  
91 Could parts of the project be delegated to commission members? Yes- parts of the projects  
92 could be delegated to individuals based on their skills and interests, as long as those  
93 individuals were required to report back to the general group. Jennifer does not support the  
94 idea of tasks being completed outside of the commission without receiving regular feedback  
95 from the group and staff.

96  
97 Molly commented that they are not sure the items on the work plan are the priority items for  
98 the town, and would like to go through the process of distilling that for themselves. Jennifer  
99 asked the group to trust the fact that planning staff has a good handle on what is working  
100 well and what needs initial improvement in terms of conservation planning. Those critical  
101 issues are reflected by the 5-year list of priorities. These were items identified as data gaps at  
102 the time of the last town plan update- so she urges the group to trust that process so that  
103 they can get started on a project from the list. Jennifer explained that it would be very time  
104 consuming to recreate the process of developing this initial work plan. She has a background  
105 as a land use and conservation planner, and worked as the staff conservation planner in  
106 Williston, so all that experience and a great deal of thought went into creating the list of tasks  
107 before them. Jeff says that he once taught a class on conservation planning, and Planning is  
108 “not that difficult”.

109  
110 *What should be the next steps moving forward?*

111 Jennifer offered to revise the work plan, removing things that are done or being taken on by  
112 other groups. Next meeting they will continue the conversation about what they would like  
113 to work on coming up and continue working on scheduling public meetings for Community  
114 Values Mapping. They agreed their meetings should last until 5:30 because they only meet  
115 once per month.

116  
117 **5. Adjournment:** Adjourn at 5:30 PM, meeting concluded.