

**TOWN OF MIDDLEBURY CONSERVATION COMMISSION**  
**APRIL 29, 2019 MEETING MINUTES**  
**DRAFT**

Meeting called to order at 4:32 by Monica Pryzperhart

Minutes of March meeting: Motion to approve by Amy, Jeff seconded, all voted in favor except Judy who abstained (absent from previous meeting)

**Member updates:**

- 1) Cornwall CC is interested in creating a citizen scientists road wildlife crossing monitoring project. Wants to know whether we'd like to make it a regional efforts, with other town. Similar model to the one Salisbury used a few years ago. Tracker was hired to do a training. They want to do the training next fall for a winter project. WildMid group might be interested --- they already adopted a vernal pool. Wants to model wildlife corridors and do citizen science too. Schoolhouse Hill Road in East Middlebury is a good place to monitor for deer, fox and turtles. We're interested in learning more.
- 2) VT Master Naturalist Program trains naturalists who will fulfill a community service requirement. Alicia Daniel at UVM invited Monica (personally) to help bring the program to Middlebury. Alicia would do outreach to community beforehand to look for potential projects and would include the Middlebury CC in the planning process if there is interest. Planning meeting likely this summer.
- 3) According to Kathleen Ramsey, the Selectboard approved terms for all of us. Jeff, Molly and Monica have 2-year terms. Andrew and Amy are 3-year, Kemi and Judy are 4-year. Kathleen hopes to have a plan for staffing the ConComm by the end of this week. We are trying to figure out a good way to ensure regular communication with the Town.
- 4) Climate Economy Action Center is holding weekly meetings, and Amy has been attending. They are starting a new non-profit to transition to a non-fossil-fuel-based economy. Midd is starting to consider its energy plan for the new Town Plan.

**Community Values Mapping Event Feedback:**

- We got another 20 or so contributors at the MNFC event (Judy, Molly and Andrew staffed the table).
- Kemi and Monica plan to go to Shaw's on Saturday morning. We got a suggestion to go to VT Field Sports. Andrew might be willing to go.

**Water Quality Chat Feedback:**

- Good audience, lots of data. Matt Witten said that the state is cutting back on the number of samples that the state lab is willing to sample. They plan to cut turbidity and *E.coli*. For turbidity, they intend all groups to have their own meter to sample. *E. coli* samples (235ppm is the threshold) will only be done for major swimming holes that consistently have problems; P is a proxy for *E. coli* (supposedly). State says that more groups are doing more samples, which adds pressure to the state lab. Our local group has a lot of sites compared to other locations.

## **Otter Creek Wetlands Discussion:**

- What's the issue here? Making sure that abutting land-owners aren't vehemently opposed to reclassification.
- Arrowwood is identifying Class 3 wetlands (vernal pools are Class 2). These sites would need more examination.
- Conserved MALT lands cover a good part of the wetlands in southeast Middlebury. National wetland inventory maps aren't very accurate. Middlebury map on ANR atlas is pretty good however. Brandon and Sudbury are part of the Otter Creek wetland complex but it doesn't go down to Rutland.
- Steering Committee is meeting Monday 6:30 at RPC. Most people are approaching their Selectboards to let them know this project is happening. Zapata has done presentations in Leicester and Brandon, trying to set up more in Whiting. Cornwall has identified an area to target. Questions: will this affect replacement of Swamp Road bridge btw Salisbury and Cornwall? Will it affect mosquito spraying? Will it limit use of ag properties for energy? Once areas are re-classified, is state likely to change the rules to make restrictions more severe? People need to know that this won't have major implications because development can't happen in these sites anyway.
- Andrew has talked with Marc Lapin --- we don't have a lot of the Otter Creek wetlands, but more attention needs to go into protecting swamps.
- Option to bump up everything in Middlebury that's part of the Otter Creek wetland? Questions about whether it has to be contiguous or could be islands within the larger wetland. Any wetland within the polygon would have the 100' buffer. What would it look like to have the buffers throughout? Maybe map these. Who will delineate wetlands, however? State is trying to update their maps anyway.
- **Decisions:** We need to learn about the wetland before we commit to reclassifying. Action steps: Identify land-owners, get maps zoomed into areas of interest with parcel boundaries and land cover, invite land-owners to meet with us and talk with us about what would be impacted. Possible people to invite: Fitzey Fitzgerald in East Middlebury, Chris Zeoli, Marc Lapin (about college lands). We'll start by talking with just a few landholders, consider a larger meeting later. Andrew will find out what Cornwall is doing. We could ask Matt Witten about his experience contacting land-owners.

## **More Walks and Talks?**

- National Pollinator Week is June 17-23. Some people who responded to CVM were interested in where pollinators are. WildMidd group on campus could help get the word out.
- Decision: Judy will lead on organizing a Pollinators talk; Monica will support.

## **Moving forward:**

- We could do a SWAT analysis of Middlebury, section by section. What do we know about issues and what needs work in each section?
- When Midd starts its energy planning: we have the highest target of any town in Addison County. We need to suggest areas that are off-limits. Be sensitive to how people will react --- beware of fencing, which restricts wildlife movement.

## **Next meeting:**

- Memorial Day is the scheduled date. Check with Marc Lapin about his availability and possibly other land-owners in the vicinity. Andrew will ask about Marc; Amy will contact Fitzpatrick.