

TOWN OF MIDDLEBURY CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Rotary Small Meeting Room, First Floor
Alternative Location- Planning Office, Second Floor
Municipal Office Building
77 Main Street, Middlebury

Monday, FEBRUARY 24, 2020

12:00 – 1:30 PM

(APPROVED MAY 4, 2020)

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

Not Present: Amy Sheldon

Attending Public Comment period: Jennifer Murray, Town of Middlebury

I. Public Comment period

J. Murray recommended consideration of a property in the Town of Middlebury that may potentially come up for sale. The property has a number of conservation merits, including providing buffering for the Trail Around Middlebury (TAM), reducing fragmentation of Means Woods, wetlands, and open space.

J. Howarth made motion: The Conservation Commission generally supports acquisition of properties for conservation that adjoin existing conserved town properties and the TAM, and the Commission will provide specific recommendations and information if requested by the Select Board. A. L’Roe seconded. Motion unanimously approved

Selectboard will be talking about future actions for Creek Road on March 10 meeting-

It was expressed that it would be great to have a conservation commission representative on the Creek Road Task Force.

J. Howarth will attend the March 10th meeting and report back- CC will come up with short and long-term suggestions for that area and provide comments to SB.

J. Howarth: These issues are all things that would be addressed by a town-wide conservation plan- need to get it done to have the longer-term view of where/what to conserve.

II. Approval of minutes

January 2020- motion to approve M. Anderson, seconded by M. Przyperhart, unanimously approved.

III. Commission member updates

Andrew L'Roe: Wetland Classification updates- The Otter Creek Wetlands Steering Committee (with members representing Middlebury, Cornwall, Salisbury, and Leicester) is moving forward with developing a proposal based on state-identified Significant Natural Community areas (ranked Very Rare/ Rare/ Uncommon). In Middlebury that would be a starting point of 567 acres (out of the 1,326 total acres of Otter Creek class II wetlands, 42.8%)- which is less than Cornwall (1,842 acres, 57%) and Leicester (997, 38.5%), but more than Salisbury (540, 23.1%). The Steering Committee have scheduled a meeting with state staff from Wetlands and Fish & Wildlife programs on March 12 to discuss whether Natural Community areas would be an appropriate boundary. The Steering Committee is meeting again on March 16.

The Climate Friendly Forests presentation by Bill Keeton at IIsley Library has been re-scheduled for Feb 27th- A. L'Roe will send email out with details.

J. Wiger-Grohs: Asked about benefits of (re)joining the Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions (AVCC)- membership makes Commission eligible for Tiny Grants, AVCC listserv, and discounted admission to annual Summit.

J. Howarth will request that the town support membership of the Middlebury Conservation Commission in AVCC (\$50).

J. Wiger-Grohs: Provided summary of Jon Erickson discussion in Salisbury

IV. Conservation Planning

M. Przyperhart (and A. Sheldon): Have been working on draft Vision Statements for a Conservation Plan- it has been very difficult to come up with a simple overriding vision.

Will begin with ecological information, expand to "community visioning" of other conservation values- these can be put together into a map (most sensitive, most valued, etc.) to identify the best places to develop, most compatible with certain activities.

The format is going to be very important- we need to think about goals of end users- identify different tracks (recreation, climate change, land use planning, etc.). Map components and priorities

J. Howarth: He has been working on an outline of components for the Conservation Plan Identified 3 common models-

- the Conservation Necklace,
- Single-use suitability,
- Suitability across different purposes (e.g. conservation, recreation, housing)

The plan needs to incorporate past/present/future views.

The Conservation Commission should aim to elicit Goal statements from the community and get the best information about each system- starting by including the inventory of existing data layers and information (available in

shared Middlebury Conservation Plan Inventory)- identify missing pieces, sources.

Agrees that we still need to decide how best to present the information (Online ArcMap, StoryMap, etc.)

V. Set Next Agenda & Meeting Date

Next meeting is set for **March 16, Noon to 1:30**

J. Howarth- motion to adjourn, M. Anderson- second, Unanimously approved

Meeting Adjourned at 1:30pm.