

**Souhegan Local Advisory Committee**  
**Amherst Clubhouse**  
**December 21, 2023**

In attendance were Cory Ritz (New Ipswich,) Cam Lockwood (Temple,) Marion Kastner (Amherst,) Marshall Buttrick (Greenville,) Peter Howd (Wilton,) Rich Hart (Amherst,) Rob Clemens (Amherst,) and Kleta Dudley (New Ipswich.)

Guest was Michael Atkins, lawyer for Fairfield.

**October Minutes Approved**

**Review of Fairway Electric Project-** This is a commercial site in Wilton on Route 31 South. Fairway provides electrical services for emergency situation to clients all over the Northeast and possibly further south. A subdivision was done by previous owner years ago and some site work to “level” the property has been done prior to getting permits. Fairway has applied for 2 permits, an AOT and a Shoreland Protection. Cory believes that a driveway permit has already been done. The property will need to have some of the subdivisions reunited to comply with building codes. A proposed 16,000 sq. ft. building is proposed. Plans reflect a large number of parking spaces which Rob questioned. Peter explained that Planning Board regulations based numbers of parking spaces on building sizes. Michael Atkins also noted the large fleet of vehicles that were in the company but usually out on the road. We were of the understanding from a previous meeting that the property would not be used as a parking lot for the fleet, and there would be no servicing of vehicles done on the site. This is a major concern as Wilton’s town Wells are in close proximity. In addition, there will be no storing of fuel, anti-freeze, hazardous waste or transformers.

There was also discussion about the land clearing that had taken place, type of surfaces to be used, septic issues and snow removal, and wildlife concerns. Peter requested an electronic copy of permits. It was also noted that there is a great deal of land in conservation around this location, but the adjacent lots are zoned for industrial use, which also allows for commercial development.

Comments for the AOT permit must be submitted to DES before January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024, and comments for the Shoreland Protection Act before January 12, 2024. Cory will compile comments.

**Milford Dog Park-** Previous to the meeting Celeste had mailed pictures taken after a torrential deluge (Monday, Dec. 18<sup>th</sup>) of the property next to the Souhegan where a proposed dog park would be located. The property was under several feet of water. See email from Celeste dated 12/19/23. The picture was taken from 127 Elm Street, which was not flooded. The photo was taken by the Town Engineer.

**We have long maintained that this is not the ideal site for a dog park,** however other factors must be weighed. Some of these are the proximity and access of the dog park to Keyes Park and central to downtown. Some people might see the proximity of the river as a plus for their pets (but not all.) The future flooding issue is an unknown, but steps could be taken to mitigate its possible damage. There is also the danger of trees coming down when natural disasters strike.

For our comments, Peter urged we take a balanced approach. We were concerned with disposal and cleanup of dog waste. How frequently would this happen? Trash cans would have to be firmly lashed down. We are curious about the surface within the dog containment area. The information Celeste sent on 12/19/23 also provided other items that would need to be considered, i.e. fresh water for humans and dogs. Additional comments that surfaced after the meeting were concerns about the inability of DPW's trucks to get access, and the fact that the park was hidden from view with no lighting, therefore ripe for criminal activity.

**Review of Town Report-** Cory compiled a summary of our year's goals and accomplishments to be included in each town's annual report. George and Nelson asked that there be mention of the Pedestrian Walkway in the Merrimack version. Our commitment to providing access to recreational possibilities was mentioned as something needing to be included. Eric spoke about a meeting he was invited to by the Nashua Watershed Council where they had discussed restoration of species. While we cannot be certain of all of the species that have ceased to be part of the watersheds, there are many that we are certain were once plentiful and some of them are beginning to return. He felt this was an admirable goal and human and riparian habitat coexistence should be something we aim for. Peter noted that restoration was out of our scope. Cory felt we could comment on it. Cory will send out the Annual report either to the Town Administrators or to members of the Committee to be then sent along to their town's officials.

## **Watershed Corridor Management Plan**

Many thanks to Rob, Peter and Cory who met with Emma Rearick(NRPC) to work on the corridor plan.

The results of the survey that Peter had previously put together reflected that respondents ranked water quality, riparian protection and climate change highest on the list of concerns. Public access and total watershed quality were also ranked high.

Emma will be joining us for our Jan. meeting which will be at the Police station in Milford. She will have a large full size map of the entire river that we may find useful in envisioning our goals of implementing the best practices for achieving water quality, accessibility to the river and overall watershed quality. We discussed the idea of Water Justice.

One of our goals is to have a concise (short) Management Plan. We also want to have an educational aspect and to develop outreach programs. Programs already in place include the following: Wilton Sustainability Fair, partnership with SWA in water testing and the canoe trips. We need to work on education. George worked with some kids this summer on a macroinvertebrate survey. Discussion followed on ways to open up opportunity for acquiring grant money to do these things.

We also discussed the need for scientific based decision making. Tracie could probably help here.

We want to recommend that towns do Bacterial testing and incorporate our Management Plan into the Town's Master Plans. Eric wants to improve water quality for recreational uses and to support wildlife and aquatic species. Peter wants data sharing among watershed towns. We want to make the public aware of possibilities in relation to what we now have. Water temperatures were discussed. Public access to maps. Apparently there are maps now, but perhaps they need updating and enhanced. We need to assure enforcement of buffer zones and a wish list for permitting. We need to think about the cultural heritage as well.

There are diverse uses and we need to strike a balance between impact of agricultural, industrial, personal and cultural uses. Someone noted that the more developed the landscape the more quickly the water will flow and we needed to make sure that wetlands are not impacted. We need to slow down the water and maintain floodplains. We need to educate the public on the importance of these things.

## **Local Updates**

**SWA-** Eric will be meeting with Merrimack River People concerning enhanced sampling programs. He has been picking the brains of organizations that have done testing to gather information on who goes where and how much the cost is.

**New Ipswich-** nothing to report.

**Temple-** The town is working with Piscataquog Land Trust on one property and with Monadnock Conservancy on another. In addition, 2 residents are also working on conserving their properties totaling around 400 Acres which will be contiguous with the Heald Tract. This was updated by Cathy Joly.

**Greenville-** Marshall reported that the Drug Rehab people have asked for yet another continuance which will be in February.

Marshall's contact at the EPA has nothing to report on the most recent violations at Pilgrim Foods. He was hopeful that something would happen soon.



The electric company has been doing major cuttings along the route of their powerline. They do have a Vegetation Management Permit, but Marshall thought the cutting was excessive. It appears to be in some cases, cutting where they have never done so before.

**Wilton-**Peter reported that the Wilton Planning Board had given conditional (14 pages worth) approval to River's Edge. This is a development that began as a 22 lot proposed subdivision but has been whittled down to 8 lots. The riverside is a single lot. There is also a 20' easement to the town along the river to allow for a trail.

**Amherst-**There are changes to the floodplain and wetland ordinances on the docket for the March ballot. The buffer requirements will be clearer and they are taking a look at the federal floodplain standards. The Conservation Commission had asked for a warrant article for money, but the budget was deemed too tight and it was cut.

Submitted Dec. 22 by Kleta Dudley, sec.  
Next meeting at Milford Police Facility, 7:00 p.m Jan.  
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