



Waterbury Conservation Commission

Minutes

June 8, 2021

Via teleconference

Commission attendees: Allan Thompson, Krista Battles, Billy Vigdor, Linda Gilpin, Steve Hagenbuch, Tracy Sweeney, Kelsey Applegate

Commissioner Absence: Erin Hurley

Public: Mike Hedges

- Meeting convened 6:00 pm
- Introduction of new commissioner Kelsey Applegate
 - Kelsey joined the meeting by phone and provided her background. She and her husband moved to Waterbury in March after being attracted to the area. She has a logistics background from her time with the Air Force, and is looking to make a career change to something with an environmental focus.
 - Kelsey was enthusiastically welcomed by the other commissioners, who introduced themselves and spoke about their environmental interests and experience on the Commission.
- Review, prioritize and modify agenda
 - Krista asked to add Water Quality Monitoring to the agenda
 - Billy offered to provide an update regarding the disk golf course (deferred to the next meeting)
 - Discussion of the presentation to the Development Review Board (DRB) was deferred to the next meeting, as was an update on the commission website
 - These agenda changes were approved by the Commission
- Public Comments
 - Mike voiced his concern about a new property in a heavily wooded area of Perry Hill that is coming before the DRB for a building permit. The site plan includes clearing of a significant portion of the lot, including areas that have multiple wildlife paths and heavy recreation use
 - Discussion centered around whether the Commission should try to participate in the DRB July meeting when the permit would be reviewed.
 - Steve H stated that this would fit in with what the WCC is trying to accomplish with a newly proposed conservation area overlay district, but the proposed development meets current zoning requirements and there may not much that the Commission could suggest. He proposed focusing on having the Planning Commission adopt the conservation area overlay district to address similar situations.



- Billy reminded the Commission that it was asked to take a holistic approach when submitting Commission comments to the Planning Commission.
 - Steve H. suggested that the WCC should start showing up at DRB meetings to “serve notice” that the Commission will be getting more involved, particularly in bringing information about wildlife impacts of proposed permits and asking applicants to do the same
 - Allan said there isn’t time to study issues associated with this particular project and to submit well- supported comments.
 - Commissioners are encouraged to attend the DRB meeting but were reminded to make clear that they are there as private citizens and not speaking on behalf of the Commission or any Commissioner.
- Review and approve prior meeting minutes
 - Minutes of the prior meeting were approved with several changes by Billy submitted prior to the meeting.
 - Election of new officers
 - A slate of officers was nominated by Steve H, consisting of:
 - Chair: Allan Thompson
 - Vice Chair: Billy Vigdor
 - Treasurer: Erin Hurley
 - Kelsey self-nominated to serve as Secretary, which was enthusiastically supported by all commissioners
 - Allan moved and Steve H. seconded a motion to approve the proposed officer slate. The commissioners voted unanimously in favor.
 - Discussion of a Town forest off of Blush Hill
 - Allan Thompson informed the WCC that he had been approached by a Trustee of the Russell Trust, which owns a 100+ acre lot off of Blush Hil. Trust language specifies that the land is to be donated to either the Vermont Land Trust or the Town of Waterbury, and the Trust would like to see the land conserved and used for recreation, with the possibility of creating a Town Forest.
 - There are multiple resources for creating a town forest, and they have already spoken with the Trust for Public Land about how to do so
 - According to the WCC bylaws, the Commission would be responsible for management of a town forest, but other towns have created Town Forest management subcommittees.
 - If it goes forward, there would be an extensive public process (e.g. approving kinds of recreation allowed), likely with a 3-5 year timeline. This would include extensive neighborhood and other stakeholder comments.
 - According to Tracy there are many “bootleg” mountain biking and other trails. Krista knows the property well and views it as a great recreation resource; she has GIS mapped the area. The main trail is also currently related to the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) network.
 - If a Town Forest were to be created, parking would need to be addressed. Parking currently occurs on an adjacent parcel on which the WDEV radio tower is located.



- Instead of a Town Forest, the land could be owned by WLI with a conservation easement or deed restriction, or it could remain in the ownership of the Russell Trust. Waterbury Area Trails Association (WATA) might be a partner in oversight and management of the property.
- The next step is for WLI to continue working with the Russell Trust and networking to determine how best to move forward. WLI is looking into what it would take to own an easement.
- Allan made a motion for approval of WCC exploring the creation of a Town Forest at the Russell Property, and creating a sub-committee that would include non-commission members to review the issues that might be involved. Krista seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

- WCC commitment to Shutesville Hill Wildlife Corridor Partnership
 - Allen spoke about the need for a formal recommitment to continue participation and coordination with the Shutesville Hill Wildlife Corridor Partnership
 - Participation of the WCC has been vitally important to the work of the Partnership; all commissioners are welcome to attend any Shutesville meetings
 - A motion was made to reaffirm the commitment to the SHWC Partnership; Steve seconded and all approved
 - The commitment included municipal advocacy, public outreach and education.

- Water Quality Testing
 - Krista provided an overview and update on the Water Quality Sampling work she and others have been involved in at multiple locations. They are looking primarily to see if road salt is permeating into local waterways. Krista asked if this could become a formal WCC project.
 - After brief discussion, Krista made a motion to begin water quality sampling in Thatcher Brook and Graves Brook and bring results back to the group once data has been collected and digested. The motion was approved unanimously.

- Meeting adjourned 7:55 pm

Respectfully submitted by Linda Gilpin
June 17, 2021