



## **Waterbury Conservation Commission**

### **Minutes**

**January 26, 2022**

**In person and virtual**

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

Commissioner Absence: none

Public: Pageen Mulhern

- Meeting convened 6:00 pm
- Review and approve prior meeting minutes
  - Billy proposed a motion to approve the November meeting minutes with no changes. Joan seconded the motion, with no dissenting votes.
  - Steve proposed a motion to approve the September meeting minutes with some administrative edits. Allan seconded the motion, with no dissenting votes.
- Review, prioritize and modify agenda
  - No changes were made
- Goals and capacities discussion
  - The Conservation Commission reviewed the list of future projects and strategies brainstormed at the previous meeting, then narrowed down the list. The conservation commission voted to prioritize conducting inventories as a primary goal. The concept of “inventories” will be further developed and defined at the next meeting.
  - Notes from the brainstorming session are attached.
- Public Comments
  - None
- Meeting adjourned 8:00 pm

Respectfully submitted by Kelsey Applegate January 31, 2022



**Attachment:**

**Notes of Waterbury Conservation Commission meeting of January 26, 2022.**

These are not verbatim comments, simply brief reflections of the discussion. These do not reflect any decisions of the Commission. Blue highlights show priorities that were identified preliminarily.

1. Overarching WCC {Goals}

- a. Rural cultural values (there was a comment that this may not be an overarching goal)
  - i. To conserve and inventory rural and cultural values?
    1. To identify those values?
  - ii. We want to identify what makes Waterbury special, preserve those features and identify what is changing.
  - iii. We will reach out to help address stakeholder values
  - iv. Envision Waterbury beyond building and streets, what about biking and safety and pretty
- b. Identify community values
- c. Build credibility of the WCC by gaining expertise and through building an inventory
  - i.
- d. There comes a point where personal goals need to meet the WCC goals and other broader goals.
  1. The interest of one person and may not be in line with the community.
- e. Village values and water resources (may not be an overarching goal)
- f. Conservation –
  - i. Needs to be defined and promoted
  - ii. Several commissioners viewed this as a priority.
  - iii. The meaning could be misunderstood by the community if not defined
  - iv. There can be Inconsistencies between WCC and other definitions.
- g. One commissioner suggested prioritizing process,
  - i. The suggestion is not to identify and protect a single resource
  - ii. The process should be iterative,
    1. For example, the WCC obtains information, uses that information to reach out and educate, then learns from reaching out.
- h. Social Justice is also an important priority for the WCC
  - i. Identify how Waterbury is changing, what is in the WCC control, what is not.



- ii. Thinking intersectionally in terms of nature, animal habitat, housing. How does that fit the trajectory of the city, State and Country.
2. WCC Organization
- a. Shutesville Wildlife Corridor Partnership
    - i. Leveraging experience; lessons learned from the efforts of that group.
    - ii. One commissioner thought the WCC's greatest accomplishment was associated with its work with the Partnership; the Partnership brought together various Town constituencies and boards to be successful.
  - b. Bring on other resources'
    - i. Can partner to achieve non-priority items
  - c. Dollars – how do we get funding for our missions and goals?
  - d. Use other resources to advance our goals
  - e. Town-owned land, gifts to town
  - f. Is the WCC an advocate or expert?
    - i. One commissioner suggested the WCC needs to gain expertise to effectively advocate and gain credibility.
  - g. Understand the capacity and capability of the WCC to achieve its goals (AT priority)
    - i. How to engage in municipal process in an effective way
    - ii. Bylaws is a good example, learned a lot but did not get the attention it warranted.
    - iii. Need to be able to engage with people that come to the WCC for help.
    - iv. We don't have a process to figure out how to be productive.
    - v. What capacity do we have and it has to fit into the personal capacity of each volunteer
    - vi. Do we have the capacity to achieve our goals?
3. Understanding Community Values (learning)
- a. Inventories (example of a singular project with a concrete result)
    - i. Several commissioners included this as a priority item.
    - ii. What do non-profits want, not just inventory of natural resources for the community desire
    - iii. What tools are available to enhance the WCC capacity
    - iv. Defined? How broad is the inventory
      - 1. Rural and cultural values (may dovetail with community survey)
      - 2. What is the scope of the inventory (JB)?
    - v. Advocate for the resources, not just an advocate (or adversary).



1. May need to advocate for the natural resources even if the community does not.
  - b. Learning, listening, engaging
  - c. **Community Surveys**
    - i. Way to engage the community
    - ii. What are people looking for with respect to natural resources.
  - d. Understanding changing community
  - e. Village values and water resources
  - f. Ridgelines, connectivity, and fragmentation
  - g. Pollinators
4. Educating
- a. The strength of WCC is the board membership
    - i. Can combine educating the public and town as a single set of tasks/goals.
    - ii. Cohesion when Shutesville was being considered.
    - iii. Need to have material, delivery mechanism and environment to have an effective education program.
    - iv. Leverage expertise of partners to help educate
    - v. **Engagement of Board and Community**
      1. This was raised several times.
      2. Need to appear before Boards but need to educate ourselves; an inventory is a means to achieve the goal.
      3. Where are here to help; participate in the priorities of others.
      4. Look to other boards to tell us what our priorities are?
      5. Beyond DRB, engage with many boards (Rec, PC, SB, etc)
      6. Unique WCC contributions
      7. Help develop policy and engage
      8. Must consider their perspective as well as ours.
        - a. We don't want to be little NYC or CA
        - b. How to turn that into action – have someone visit us? Can build understanding, partnership and trust.
  - b. **Public education events**/community engagement/provide resources
    - i. Hands on activities/community engagement and volunteering
  - c. Website
  - d. Water quality
  - e. Flood resilience
  - f. Economic incentives to conserve
  - g. **Engaging with other Town Boards**



5. Representing Community Interests (Advocacy)
  - a. DRB (representative, help town boards make conserve. Decisions)
  - b. Engage with town boards
  - c. Role in Changing Community?
  - d. Bike and pedestrian friendly, village values
  - e. Balance economic needs with conservation needs

## 6. Process Priorities

- i. Learning
  1. About other boards
  2. Not starting with clarifying roles, first learn their priorities
  3. DRB/PC/Rec Comm/Select Bd/
    - a. Learn about them and see where we can work with them and benefit from their experience.
  - 4.
- ii. Listening
  1. Businesses, if we were to generate conservation interests, the businesses would need to be on board (enlightened self interest)
  2. Need to assist others
- iii. Engaging
  1. Visible Engaging Events
  2. DRB is "after the ground work is done"
  3. But what about the regulations that are undergoing change?
- iv. Inventorying
  1. Natural resources and surveys
  2. What does community want, need and understand
- v. Other groups
  1. Non-profits or others
  2. Best practices