

NORTHFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Minutes of the Meeting
December 9, 2015

The meeting was called to order by Laura Hill-Eubanks at 6:30 p.m.

I. Roll Call: Present: Commissioners L. Hill-Eubanks, R. Ruttenberg, N. Miller, J. Pekol, L. Matthews, C. Barnes. Absent: Don Wallace, Russ Barrett. Guest: Liza Walker

II. Set/Adjust Agenda: Additional item: Solar Forum

III. Public Participation: None

IV. Approval of Minutes: Minutes of November 11, 2015 were approved 6-0.

V. Discussion

a. Vermont Land Trust, Waitsfield: Liza Walker, presenter.

Liza presented to us that the VT Land Trust would be interested in working with the NCC as:

1. a supportive resource on projects, eg. town greens, rec fields, parks
2. identifying land important to the community, eg. Town Forest
3. seeking donations for easements
4. seeking gifts of land for preservation, and eligible for tax benefits
5. identifying farm properties with competitive resources, eg. land can support a viable commercial operation

Discussion:

- Norwich land adjacent to the Town Forest: if not continued to be zoned as recreation, the possibility of residential development opens up
- Norwich could conserve land in perpetuity
- A conservation fund is important and serves as an incentive for others to contribute
- Seeking a conservation easement for Dustin's Pasture and the Town Forest restricts development rights and the land is held by the VT Land Trust
- A conservation easement on the Town Forest would have little impact on town finances
- NCC could conserve the area currently owned by TDS if it added it to the Town Forest and did a conservation easement on the entire Town Forest
- Discussions of conservation with the community might open options on other adjacent parcels
- The area near the Rec field has riparian areas that would be good to include in a conservation easement

First Steps:

1. get landowners' perspective (University, phone company)
2. encourage a general feeling of cooperation of the town as a whole
- Laura and Nathan will serve as a committee to investigate a path to opening these conversations with TDS and Norwich by the end of January 2016
- Confirm that there is increased funding available for timber land and sugar bush areas

- Confirm that a water supply (eg. Dustin's Pasture) can be written in as a stipulation for preservation in an easement

b. Town Forest Plan: Ruth Ruttenberg:

Leslie will receive invoices from Arrowood

c. Trail Grant: Ruth Ruttenberg

Ruth is applying for a trail grant for \$8700 to begin work on the designated trails in the Town Forest. The money will go toward the construction of three footbridges

- Leslie will go out to bridge sites with Norwich students whose professors have stepped up in support of the project
- Photos, drawings/sketches of possible footbridge designs from these site visits will be included in the grant proposal

d. Dog River Park: Christine Barnes

Plans for the memorial park commemorating Hurricane Irene are progressing.

- A team of NCC and Friends of the Winooski representatives, a town representative, and representative from Norwich University went to ECHO to plan recovery projects for our town
- Norwich departments of Architecture, Physical Education, Environmental Engineering and Geology held a dinner to present proposed design projects to members of the original committee and other community members
- Additional grant monies are available through Friends of the Winooski
- The memorial site is focusing primarily on education, preservation and reflection on the events of the storm which changes so many of our community members' lives

e. Button Up Workshop Follow-up: Jane Pekol

The workshop was not high in attendance. Weatherization is under-funded. Most participation is from the high end homeowner. The middle level homeowner gets left out. The focus of the workshop was educational, with an emphasis on building science.

f. Solar Forum: Jane Pekol

- Federal tax credits for installation of solar power in our community are expiring, but after 2016, there will be monies available.
- Northfield MHS is a possibility: Pam, Laura, and Jane will contact the school in early January to re-open discussion of a project at that site.
- There may be interest among townspeople in helping fund a solar project as a tax relief

VI. Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Christine Barnes
Northfield Conservation Commission