

Northfield Conservation Commission
Minutes of the Meeting of August 15, 2018

I. Roll Call

Present: Pam Knox, Laura Hill-Eubanks, Ruth Ruttenberg, Russ Barrett, Jane Pekol
Jonathan Spencer

II. Set/Adjust Agenda

III. Public Participation (Scheduled): See Jonathan's information below on the Solar Farm.

IV. Approval of Minutes: July 18th, 2018 Approved 5-0-0

V. Discussion:

Solar Farm on Cheney Field

PUC has a meeting Monday, want to kick solar project to a town vote on the March ballot. Concern about how the question is worded on the ballot, public education campaign would be needed. Three options currently under discussion: developer owns, VPPSA owns, or Northfield owns panels. Ruth moves that we formally ask that the Conservation Commission have input on the wording of the ballot. Pam seconded the motion. Ruth believes we should have a candidate forum before November, potentially end of September. We will reach out to Jeff Schulz in order to get on the agenda for an upcoming meeting. The question keeps coming around as to whether water rate-payers originally paid for the Cheney Field land, and who legally has the decision-making power on this project?

Is anyone in the Coalition ready to start looking for alternative sites? Property near the industrial Park and Cabot (between Memorial Park ballfield and Cabot). For private land, lease conditions are typically 25 years.

TDS Purchase

Laura reported that the contract is finished and delivered. The closing date is not set but must happen before October 1. Deb brought up the possibility of doing a celebration, potentially at Chandra Blackmer's because you can see Paine Mountain from her farm. Laura will inform Liza (from the Vermont Land Trust).

Paine Mountain Foot Race and Fundraising

Foot race is on for Saturday! Have only 10 shirts left. Lidia wants to use a few as prizes—OK with the Commission. This may be the first year of an annual event!

Energy Meeting

Northfield's Energy Future is hosting a Community Conversation tomorrow on energy and solar siting. Planners can send Jane a template energy policy docs that could be helpful, and the survey results. Energy forum will be upcoming in September. Could use a more robust survey on energy siting.

Emerald Ash Borer and Education

Tuesday, August 21, Russ Barrett and Meredith Whitney (UVM) will be doing a briefing at the Unite Church. Boy Scouts will host and bring snacks. Laura Ranker will be putting a sandwich board up to advertise. Should advertise through the Times Argus as well. Briefing and discussion. Meredith will be bringing a display of the bugs and trees and we can see if the library will display, and have it at Labor Day. If the boy scouts can take the burden of tree identification, that would take some pressure off Russ and would be a good thing for the scouts. Laura was wondering whether Russ would be able to work on the Forestry merit badge. August 26th is the actual meeting time for the Boy Scout troop. Russ will scout out how many Ash trees are in the Church area. Ruth has some props to provide. Next step is to decide on a Committee. The 8/21 event may be a good time to recruit. What should landowners do, what should the Town do? May need a Deputy Tree Warden for the time that Russ is in Georgia. Jane will ask her husband, Joe Pekol, whether he may be interested in this role.

Labor Day Table

Idea to have a table at Labor Day. Booths are free for the town. Night on the Common will be happening in September. Ruth will speak with Laura about whether the Boy Scouts will have a table and whether or not we could participate with them, at least by putting a display. Idea to do a hay ride at Cheney Field!

Paine Mountain Hike

Idea to lead a hike up Scrag Mountain through the Waitsfield Town Forest.

Idea to make sure that people can be able to ID poison parsnip.

Other Business

Pam is going to talk to the 4th grade teachers at Open House Night. In the past they have done tree ID out in the school forest and mark the trees, then do posters. In the past, Pam has put the posters up through Town.

Misse Axelrod took pictures of the kids who attended her program on scholarship. Ruth will send these to the Rotary Club.

UVM pamphlets regarding conservation-based estate planning for land use received and reviewed.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:06 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Jane Pekol. These minutes are subject to review and revision at the next scheduled meeting but are substantially correct.