

Marlboro Conservation Commission

9/12/17 meeting minutes

Members present: Mike Purcell, Adam Gebb, Ashly Bies, Kevin Kennedy

1. Update on Planning Commission (PC) process... PC forwarded modified language the Select Board (SB). It appears to many, PC & CC, that changes may be recommended by SB for further PC revision of language before the proposed zoning is brought forward to public decision. Discussion revolved around anticipating concerns and offering recommendations during the SB review, including potential: Capacity of State Fish and Wildlife (F&W) to fulfill the Environmental Consultant role as alternative to CC (for site visits and advisory review of development plans within proposed Wildlife Habitat Overlay [no regulatory role]), and for middle ground in scaling back potential Wildlife Road Crossings Overlay.
2. Proposed Environmental Consultant language... CC recommends revising the proposed zoning language back to a CC review of all Wildlife Overlay development plans w/in 21 days, while allowing either landowner or CC to request concurrent F&W review (during or after the 21 day review period). This could provide a basis for potentially concerned landowners to double-check CC recommendations (and, if F&W recommendations differ, to officially question them), as well as for CC to request help (e.g. in the event that qualified members aren't available for the site visit or written portions of the review process). If the proposed Wildlife Overlay zoning is approved, CC will involve as many members as possible in the site visit and written review process for development plans, as well as ensure that at least one member with wildlife habitat assessment expertise is guiding the process throughout the field and office phases of the work.
3. Proposed Wildlife Road Crossing Overlay removal from zoning language... In response to large turnout of concerned landowners at the June PC public hearing, PC decided to remove the proposed Wildlife Road Crossing Overlay from the proposed zoning language that's now been sent along to the Select Board). CC recognizes that further process is needed before potential future consideration of Town-wide wildlife road crossing zoning, which at the very least didn't fit with the perspective of a number of landowners to receiving notice of the proposed crossings near the end of the PC hearing process. CC also recognized that the potential road crossings within the central North-South portion of Marlboro (between Newfane and Halifax) are crucial both to the continued viability of wildlife in Marlboro and within the region (part of the regional artery from which all other wildlife conduits in Marlboro, Halifax and Newfane flow). Since such an wildlife crossing approach focussed on central wildlife conduit areas in Town hasn't been proposed for public consideration, whereas the Town-wide approach has been up for consideration during at least seven PC public hearings while, the CC considers it may be useful for the public to have the opportunity to consider this approach at the next suitable opportunity; though we recognize that any such consideration may not fit within the current zoning process.
4. Concern that knotweed mowing could increase its invasive spread... At the August PC public hearing, Carol Ann Lobo Johnson expressed concern that mowing could spread stem fragments which might sprout and increase the spread of knotweed along Marlboro roadways. Carol asked whether the CC could discuss what might be "best practices" (within Marlboro, potentially including both municipal road crew and State Highway mowing activities). Since even small

stem fragments containing a node (joint) can re-sprout to found a new population, potential transportation on a mower blade could increase the rate of spread for an existing patch or potentially be transported to a new site and form a new patch (and, during the Fall, seeds could be transported for long distances beyond a mowed patch more easily than stem fragments). Ash will inquire with the Windham Regional Commission's Natural Resource and Transportation Planners about any measures are currently being used to mitigate the risk of mowing causing knotweed spread within Windham County.

5. The Green River Watershed Alliance (GRWA) formation update... The GRWA has received it's full grant funding request. Community outreach and representation, water monitoring, conservation planning, public education, and artistic representation will commence this Fall and Spring in the VT portion of the Green River Watershed (draining from southern of Marlboro through eastern Halifax and down western Guilford). Ashley and Patti Smith are on the GRWA Steering Committee and will be representing and reporting to Marlboro throughout the 18mo grant-funded process.
6. The Staying Connected Initiative, Green Mountain National Forest, and both the Windham and Bennington Regional Commissions are hosting a meeting to discuss local and regional planning within one of the 12 highest priority wildlife connectivity areas in our Ecoregion (Appalachian-Acadian: Northern New England, the Maritime Provinces, and adjacent New York and Quebec) next week. This Green Mountains to Berkshires Linkage, which extends East-West through nearly all of VT South of Rt 9, including Marlboro, will be at the Wilmington Town Office on 19-Sept; Adam and Ashley from the CC, and at least Patti from the PC and SB, will represent and report back to Marlboro.
7. The next viable CC meeting date is 10/4/17 and will be confirmed with Town Officials (6:30 pm at the Town Office).