

TOWN OF MARLBORO CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING

Monday, October 9th, 2017, 6:30 PM

Town Office, South Road

Present: Mike Purcell, Ashley Bies, Kevin Kennedy

MINUTES

- Review and approve minutes from last meeting (12~Sept~17).

1. Approved

- Update on Select Board discussion of proposed zoning, and upcoming Planning Commission revisions and SB hearing (Ashley).

1. Recommendation for a minimum setback of 20 feet and institution of a waiver option for setbacks in new zoning plan. This was further reduced from the initial recommendation of reducing the setback to 30 feet; the thinking being that reduced setbacks would reduce both landowner need to apply for a waiver and fragmentation of properties by development.

2. Discussed environmental consultant role for proposed wildlife habitat overlay zoning. Originally it was proposed to only have the CC in this role, and was recently revised to giving landowners developing within the proposed overlay the option to choose either the CC or Fish and Wildlife to fill this role, but it was determined that F&W couldn't do it anywhere close to the proposed 21-day timeline. Selectboard moved forward with CC being primary consultant within a 21-day timeline, but people could opt for F&W, but would have to do it on F&W timeframe, and with the provision that if the CC can't fulfill the role for any reason then the chair of the CC could designate a person or body with the expertise and ability to complete the review within the 21 day period.

3. Future of wildlife crossings in Marlboro were discussed. While the proposed zoning regulations are still working their way through the review and approval process, wildlife crossings should be tabled. Once the zoning proposals are completed and approved (or otherwise), then the CC could begin a community engagement process to shape the potential future of wildlife crossings, ideally in full collaboration with the PC. Ashley had a conversation with someone from the Starksboro CC, who gave interesting insights in how to develop a positive, successful process of inviting and facilitating large-scale public involvement in exploring and shaping municipal wildlife zoning.

- Review the connectivity habitat context of Marlboro, from ecoregion to local scales (Staying Connected Initiative, BioFinder; as Ashley presented to Select Board).

1. Ashley presented connectivity habitat maps of the Northern Appalachian/Acadian ecoregion, one of the nine most important wildlife habitat linkage areas in the ecoregion which includes southern VT and Marlboro, priority wildlife movement areas within southern VT, and the critical North~South band of habitat through the center of Marlboro that provides one of these two most important wildlife connections in this part of the State.

- Consider how to approach further wildlife movement monitoring and connectivity conservation priorities in Marlboro.

1. CC discussed the potential wildlife crossings that were recently removed from the proposed zoning, as they relate to this movement area within and through Marlboro that appears to be important at all scales from that of our ecoregion (northern New England, the Maritimes Provinces, and adjacent New York and Quebec) to our Town. Ten of the locations that have been proposed as wildlife crossings would provide connections within this critical movement area; adding up two more and adjusting several of those that have previously been proposed could help to maintain connections between each of the forest blocks within this critical wildlife movement area (and other formerly proposed crossing locations could help connect this area to the rest of Marlboro). CC decided to focus snow tracking of Winter road crossing activity on this critical area and its potential crossing locations in comparison to other areas of Marlboro and their potential crossing locations, and to invite all townsfolk to participate and assist with crossing surveys during good snow conditions this Winter. Mike suggested recruiting local landowners to check key areas of their nearby roads to increase the information available on wildlife movement in Town.

- Update on Windham Regional Commission input on Carol Johnson's concern that mowing could provide a vector facilitating knotweed's spread.

1. Windham Regional Commission planners are reviewing this concern, and have provided information on knotweed cutting as a means of invasion control but not yet on whether anything is known on the risk of mowing causing knotweed spread or how to mitigate such a threat. Once the CC receives more information on this subject, it will consider this concern further.

- Update on the Green River Watershed Alliance (Ashley).

1. Ashley, as the CC's rep. to the Alliance said many things don't begin until spring, such as water quality and monitoring and classroom outreach. But there are monthly meetings and will be a big planning meeting in November. Ashley welcomes any input or concerns from CC members and from anyone in the town. Ashley is a Marlboro rep

who has been involved in core planning. Patty Smith has also been regularly attending meetings.

- Consider whether to change the regular CC meeting date (from first Mondays to another monthly evening).

1. The CC voted to change its meeting day and time from first Mondays to second Mondays, at 7:00pm.

- Organize Minutes taking for future meetings.

1. Dante will take minutes; if Dante is not at the meeting, then Mike will take them.