

Marlboro Conservation Commission Minutes

12/11/17

Present: Ashley Bies, Mike Purcell, Pieter Van Loon, Dante Corsano, Kevin Kennedy (Adam Gebb via phone)

1. Review of previous meeting's minutes: Motion to approve: Pieter/Mike... All in favor
2. Jaime has decided to move forward with nomination to the Conservation Commission, which has been forwarded to the Select Board for their consideration.
3. Consider what's working well and what we'd like to change for CC meetings: Anticipate discussing further when Jaime can be included... Components that work; a. Following agenda, b. Collaboratively refocus when necessary, c. Wait for "New Business" portion of agenda, and/or be prepared to "table" the particular discussion until it can be put on next meeting's agenda.
4. A CC budget: Potential annual costs were discussed in comparison to the common range of Vermont CC budgets. Likely expenditures we anticipate include; a. Mapping, Windham Regional Commission officially charges for cartographic time, and it would cost us roughly \$300 for a half day of developing, updating and printing maps; b. Speaker's fees, the CC would like to organize a conservation speaker for Marlboro Fair (e.g. Sue Morse, Tom Wessels, etc.), and as part of organizing and hosting regional wildlife linkage habitat conservation discussions in Marlboro, and roughly \$300 may be expected; c. Marlboro CC cost to join the Assoc. of Vt CC's is \$50 and would discount the cost for several Marlboro CC members to attend the annual AVCC Conference to \$45 each, and several members may want to attend Community Wildlife Program trainings through the AVCC at a cost of \$25 each per two~night training; d. Surveying supplies, roughly \$100. Accordingly, a motion to submit an annual CC budget of \$1,000 to cover these projected costs (comparable to the low end of most VT CC budgets) to the Town Treasurer for consideration by the Marlboro SB... Kevin/Dante... All in favor.
5. Proposed zoning update and from the SB public hearing: Pieter reported that the hearing was well attended, and that the Wildlife Habitat Overlay portion of the proposed zoning changes did not dominate the discussions. Ultimately, the result of the SB discussion after the meeting was to submit the proposed zoning for a Town~wide vote on Town Meeting Day. It would appear that outreach to help reduce the fear of over regulation could be beneficial for public information on the proposed zoning, and the CC will communication with the Planning Commission on whether to draft a brief article that could be circulated (e.g. in the Mixer or Front Porch Forum) to help clarify the intent and context for proposed wildlife habitat provisions.
6. Carol Johnson provided information on best management practices to reduce the spread of roadside patches of invasive Japanese knotweed, and the CC will investigate making a recommendation thru appropriate channels to the Marlboro Hwy Dept to mitigate the risk of mowing equipment spreading viable chunks of the plant that could grow to form new patches and spread the invasion. With regards to the AOT, that is a state organization and perhaps membership in the state CC organization, regional CC organizations, and the collective impact of all individual concerned CCs and Towns can help change their approach to Knotweed mowing (perhaps facilitated by Regional Commissions).
7. Green River Watershed Alliance update: Project intent, focusses, scope, and approaches are still in the formative stages. Input from the public at large and residents of the watershed in particular is being sought, and welcomed through all CC members for transmission to Ashley and Patti Smith (who are the Marlboro representatives on the GRWA). Related Marlboro CC concerns include wildlife habitat and road crossings, erosion related to culverts, invasive species, and the importance of beavers and their keystone ecological role (e.g. installing dam draining devices rather than removing or killing beaver whose activities impact roadways).

8. Winter wildlife movement monitoring during conditions viable for snow tracking; CC agreed to prioritize surveying Marlboro roads when conditions remain suitable for snow tracking for at least 2 nights (and especially for at least 4 nights) after a snowstorm (and when another snowfall is imminent). CC agreed to use a standardized data collection form, and when possible to collect data using a project Ashley set up for us using iNaturalist app and website that logs locations along with photos and identification; if anyone goes out to survey without the ability to use the iNaturalist system, we will still take photos and sent them to Ashley to confirm their identity. All data will be archive through Ashley for the moment; Kevin is going to creating a CC web account that will allow the full CC to archive and access record of all our data and documents (from the field, meetings, etc.), and Ashley will upload everything he has (and which Adam has transferred to him) to this account.
9. Potential for the CC to help organize wider conservation planning and wildlife monitoring collaborations: CC began a preliminary discussion of the possibility of playing a role in organizing wildlife conservation monitoring at the scales of the 3~town GRWA scale, the 6~town regional wildlife habitat linkage (from MA to the Green Mountain National Forest), and County~wide Regional Gathering of Conservation Commissions and Organizations (which could extend this regional linkages to connect throughout State~level Highest Priority Wildlife Connectivity Habitat in Windham County).
10. The next meeting is 1/8/18
11. Motion to end meeting... Pieter/Dante... All in favor