

Meeting Minutes- Natural Resources and Conservation Committee

Wednesday, September 11, 2019

ATTENDING

Members Don Rendall, Bob Paquin, Peg Rosenau, Mike Schramm, Fred Morgan, Sean MacFaden, Jon Cocina

Staff Dean Pierce

Guests Jed Graef, Louise Piche, Rob Infantino, Jerry Storey, Jeff Herzberger, Anna Watson, Mike Ashoo, Jim White, Josh Dein, Sharon Macnair

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 by Vice Chair Don Rendall.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

The group observed a moment of silence in recognition of 9-11-2001.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

On a motion by Jon Cocina, seconded by Peg Rosenau, the agenda was approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On a motion by Mike Schramm, seconded by Jon Cocina, the minutes were approved.

OPEN TO PUBLIC

There were no comments.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

Three Jewels

Jed Graef described the project while referring to a plan labeled sheet C1.1. He explained the applicants hope to refine it based on comments and submit it for review by the DRB. The project proposes three homes on a roughly 6 acre portion of the lot some 28 acres in size. In the future a 2 acre portion might be deeded to the Zen Center. The design would exceed open space requirements. Following brief discussion, Peg Rosenau moved that the Committee recommend approval of the plan

and that the Chair be authorized to provide the applicant with a letter for the DRB. Jon Cocina seconded. The motion was approved.

Trinity Baptist

De facto project manager Rob Infantino described the plan, which proposes 8 duplex units (four buildings) on a lot that would be carved from the Trinity Baptist Church parcel. The proposal is still conceptual. Rob focused his remarks stormwater and landscaping. Members posed several questions. Sean M. suggested the project be clustered to a greater degree. A more refined plan for the project will be discussed at a future meeting.

Harris/ High Acres

Jeff Herzberger gave an overview of the project. The project consists of a 3 lot residential resubdivision (labeled as Boundary Line Adjustment but not qualifying for review per 320A and 330A) of land totaling roughly 170 acres. The size and configuration of the three parcels would change substantially. In Mr. Herzberger's words, the boundaries would be made more "sensible." Peg Roseanua moved that the Committee recommend approval of the plan and that the Chair be authorized to provide the applicant with a letter for the DRB. Bob Paquin seconded. The motion was approved.

HUMAN/WILDLIFE INTERACTIONS POLICY

Jim White introduced the topic, which relates to the Selectboard's consideration of a policy regarding management of beaver activities affecting public property. Selectboard member Jerry Storey described the evolution of that policy. Given the recent discussions, new language in the Comprehensive Plan, etc., the Selectboard is asking the SNRCC to take the lead developing an "omnibus" policy addressing human-wildlife interactions.

Jerry Storey suggested creation of a working group. The working group could "scope" the task and present information back to the entire SNRCC. Mike Ashoo sought committee member reaction to the idea. Peg Rosenau explained that the SNRCC has traditionally focused on "indirect" interactions. This task would include both direct and indirect interaction, she observed, and has a potentially huge scope. Mention was made of different specific interactions (e.g., rabid animal calls, auto-animal collisions). Jerry Storey opined the "reach of the policy should be considerable." But also "Let us know what you are thinking."

Discussion continued. Fred Morgan posed questions about state requirements affecting injured wildlife. Sharon MacNair responded and also commented on options homeowners have to control of small animals in attics. She also mentioned the availability of reliable sources of information. Peg Rosenau wanted to know "what are we lacking?" Josh Dein suggested the effort should focus on the practical things we need to do, what can help town residents, and what can help town employees. Mike Ashoo added that the policy should govern behavior of Town employees when interacting with wildlife but recommend behavior and educate members of the general public.

Discussion continued further. Sean MacFaden commented on the different scales (from individual staff members to the entire landscape) the discussion can take place on. Don Rendall and Jerry Storey

both referenced the work now taking place on a regional level, work which recognizes that wildlife resources are not contained by political boundaries. Jim White commented in similar policy work being done in the Town of Salisbury, south of Middlebury.

To help wrap up the discussion, Don Rendall expressed support and indicated a subcommittee is the way to go. Others agreed. Dean Pierce will create a Doodle Poll in hopes of helping find a mutually agreeable date and time for discussion. Results of the discussion will be reported at the next SNRCC meeting.

PRIORITIZING LANDS BEFORE THEY ARE THREATENED OR LOST

Mike Schramm led a discussion of land in Shelburne that should be prioritized and if possible protected before it is lost due to some unanticipated threat. His concern might be embodied in the idea 'What can the town do to avoid a situation like what happened when land along the Laplatte River was converted to a rail facility and salt storage site?' Dean Pierce provided a thumbnail history of the site, including zoning classifications. The group then spent several minutes reviewing and discussing maps (including maps prepared by the SNRCC for the Planning Commission). Many valuable and/or sensitive areas were identified. Jon Cocina posed the question 'What do we do?' Mike Ashoo voiced support for increasing the size of the open space fund, perhaps by increasing the annual contribution to a penny on the tax rate. Mike Schramm expressed concern about lands located along the railway. Sean MacFaden emphasized the importance of personal relationships being developed with the owners of important properties. Before concluding the discussion, the group agreed that conversations such as this one should occur on a regular basis.

POSSIBLE SPECIAL MEETING TO DISCUSS BYLAW CHANGES

Those assembled discussed the possibility of scheduling a special meeting to consider the work being done on bylaw changes (work by Don Rendall). The group agreed to meet again in a special meeting on September 25, with bylaw changes being the sole agenda item.

CONSERVATION PROJECTS

Dean Pierce reported there was nothing to report regarding conservation projects that had not been discussed previously. He also mentioned the plans of the Regional Conservation group to hold a public engagement event on the Ewing property on the third Saturday in October. Questions were asked about the status of the effort to conserve some of the agricultural land on the Ewing property. Dean Pierce will check with Al Karnatz.

UPDATES

Dean Pierce mentioned that the Planning Commission has agreed to hold another joint retreat with the SNRC. A Doodle poll will be launched in the next week or two. Owing to a variety of factors, the

most likely time is late October or early November, although the poll will include dates in mid October and December.

Don Rendall reported on his participation in the Regional Conservation group meeting in South Burlington. He attended (along with Gail Albert) while Dean p was on vacation. Sean MacFaden made an announcement relating to the availability of new GIS data for conserved lands, and there was a brief discussion of its contents and the mapping activities of the regional conservation group.

As the SNRCC's newest member, Bob Paquin introduced himself and described his work experiences and background (including many conservation projects "at the 30,000 foot level." In reference to the hour he also remarked "Don needs a gavel."

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:45, upon motion by Jon Cocina and unanimous vote.