

Natural Resources and Conservation Committee
Minutes for January 12, 2022

- Call SNRCC meeting to Order:
 - Gail, Don, Bob, Chandler, & Sean present
 - Fred, Jon, Christine, Mike later
 - Joined by Adele Gravitz, Dean Pierce, Rowland Davis, Mike Ashooh, Judy Raven, Jim White, Aaron Worthley (Arrowwood), Michael Lew-Smith (Arrowwood), P Worrall
- Identify minute taker
 - Chandler
- Review and Approve Agenda
 - Bob moves, Don seconds, 5-0
- Review and approve minutes of Dec 8, 2021
 - Don moves, Gail seconds, 6-0 (Chandler abstains, wasn't present)
- Public Comment (for items not on agenda)
 - None
- Berkeley-LaRosa subdivision (7:04 –7:17)
 - Jon points out it meets Open Space requirement. Feels like it is a solid application.
 - Gail queries whether Open Space agreement signed? Unknown... Gail recommends they have one.
 - Gail thankful design changes that SNRCC recommended previously were incorporated.
 - Don indicates BioFinder map identifies ENT... however after follow-up, this rare species is located across the street
 - Plan only shows two lots—Adele thinks there should be three, so will verify which plan this is. Possible third lot is what is designated for Open Space.
- Development Review Shelburne Shipyard submittal (7:17-7:39)
 - Gail: what exactly is being proposed?
 - Don: southern part of property where many stored boats located, will be redesigned for expanded boat storage; addition of boardwalk along water line; further north a couple of small buildings may be removed, redesigns to larger buildings; changes to parking; some new stormwater infrastructure.
 - Jon: Proposed driveway goes through mapped wetland—this likely most pertinent issue for SNRCC.
 - Fred: Will driveway be packed gravel or paved?
 - Bob: Packed gravel vs. paved doesn't make much of a difference.
 - Adele: Sending in a list of questions to be answered is a good starting point.
 - Gail writing down list of questions to pass along to Ken.
 - Mike: Can someone from development team come discuss project with us? Why can't proposed new entry to parking be located off of Harbor Road where top three parking spots at northern extent are, rather than proposed new road going through wetlands?

- Discuss Habitat study with the Arrowwood consulting team members, Aaron Worthley and Michael Lew-Smith (7:39-8:39)
 - Gail: We have been working towards inventorying important natural resources. Would like to identify areas of the town where these exist and are not adequately protected.
 - Don: Would like to follow in footsteps of S. Burl., Act 171 mapping.
 - Aaron: What are your goals? Assessing areas of town for conservation prioritization? Regulatory structure?
 - Don: Creating natural resource map/inventory, where regulatory efforts could build off of
 - Sean: *shares presentation of what SNRCC has done so far*
 - Sean: Took recent high resolution 1-m forest patch dataset from UVM and began to assess assemblage (size) of forest patches. Standard in S. Burl. 20 acres; we followed this criterion as well—43 blocks in Shelburne greater than 20 acres. Several large blocks not entirely contained within Shelburne.
 - Sean: We have performed analysis of where forest blocks are located but no wildlife implications. CCRPC recommended looking at this project ‘through the lens of wildlife habitat’.
 - Gail: Would like to maintain connectivity between pieces, identify which are the most valuable.
 - Adele: What are the criteria for defining a forest block, besides size?
 - Aaron: Act 171 defined forest block, so that’s what’s been used. S. Burl. was interested in where the forest blocks are and which ones are the “best” due to their minimal remaining forest blocks. Ranking system developed to identify areas of interest.
 - Aaron: 20 acres was the scale that worked for S. Burl. and the species that remained.
 - Sean: Challenge is to find how to rationalize a set of protocols to incorporate these forest blocks into town development plan that makes sense.
 - Adele: Have [consultants] ever worked on developing a management plan for carbon sequestration?
 - Aaron: Have discussed, not implemented.
 - Adele: Focus solely on ecology, or have you looked into the economics/other benefits of protecting natural resources?
 - Michael (Arrowwood): Focus has been on ecology. LaPlatte River comes to mind when thinking of this and Shelburne.
 - Aaron: Most typical project for us is town-scale resource mapping of individual components (wetlands, forest community, landcover) then derive from this other info e.g., core habitat areas. With Act 171, focus has started to move from individual components to identifying
 - Michael (Arrowwood): Identify what Shelburne’s focus is, so that a tailored plan can be developed. Must also consider just because a forested area doesn’t meet particular size (i.e., 20 acres), doesn’t mean it isn’t biologically important.
 - Adele: Wildlife route vs. significant communities approaches? What are the different outcomes?
 - Aaron: Let’s use wetlands as an example. Generally, poorly mapped at the town-scale, but their significance is well-recognized. Landscape-level protections (i.e., forest blocks) on the rise due to the State’s interest in them, regulation.
 - Sean: Shelburne won’t be most ecologically diverse town in Vermont due to past; felt broader landscape approach would be more effective to suit Shelburne’s needs.

- Aaron: Vast majority of work done remotely, often difficult to gain landowner access and not realistically feasible.
- Gail: Is there value of trying to educate landowners to what the ecological value of their land is?
- Michael (Arrowwood): A lot of value in that, public outreach is very important. Having local buy-in is important to the success of these types of projects.
- Jim White: With respect to individual species, how do you identify different threat levels to these species?
- Aaron: At town-wide scale, not much in the way of identifying these communities. In a reasonably short project, unlikely to encounter these kind of species.
- Gail: What do you think would be an appropriate direction for us to move forward on this?
- Aaron: Start thinking about whether this should be a regulatory tool? What are the specifics of the regulation? From there, work on identifying forest blocks.
- Discuss Natural Resource issues with Selectboard Chair Mike Ashooh and Adele Gravitz (8:39-9:15)
 - Mike A: Arrowwood suggestion to dial in on study good. Hope that we can have a broader scope.
 - Gail: Forest blocks seem to be most reasonable to target given our [potential] budget and timeline & forest blocks contain other components (e.g., wildlife, carbon sequestration, etc).
 - Adele: High-level outline of the type of regulations that would come out of this. Think more broadly about conservation and how it fits into other aspects of what Shelburne is trying to do. How would this benefit other things going on in Shelburne?
 - Mike A: Who else does this kind of work? What else do they do—do they do more comprehensive reviews? Does like idea of inventory.
 - Adele: What could be repaired?
 - Bob: Less into regulation side, more into conservation side of the project. Inventory what's left and where we can go from there.
 - Jon: Agree with what's already been said. Need to clarify whether we want to chase down regulations vs. conservation.
 - Fred: Agrees with Bob's sentiment.
 - Mike A: Open Space seems to be favorable among many.
 - Fred: There is real economic value to conserving land, character of the town.
 - Gail: Select Board needs to commit to preserving our natural resources.
 - Christine: Does seem that we need to narrow our focus. What is the town's sentiment?
 - Mike S: Doesn't seem like our community is that divided over this issue, regardless of handful of large development projects. Having Open Space on ballot each year shows its favorability with the community.
 - Rowland Davis: Can't necessarily separate regulations from conservation.
 - Dean Pierce: PC survey generally showed value for Open Space. If you want this for regulation—ambiguity is your enemy.
 - Donna: Is forest block approach the generalist way?
 - Adele: Focus on goals—product will come from this.
 - Jim White: If there is a question on sentiment of the town, then should try and get the sentiment of the town. Should pursue both regulation and conservation.
 - Sean: Focus on forest block because currently that is the only aspect that can be pursued regulatorily (as outlined by the State).

- Don: State laws don't allow a town to regulate forests, but, can identify important wildlife in them and regulate/protect that.
 - Percy: Need to do the mapping so we know what we have. Need regulations so that action can actually be pursued.
 - Mike A: Leverage the Open Space fund can provide is not much. Regulation not only restriction/prevention... can use incentivization, other avenues as well.
 - Adele: Carbon sequestration not regulatory; can be revenue source.
- Don present regs overview on Growth zones in Town Plan and start on Form Base Code overlay
 - Some distinct differences observed between Town Plan & Form-Based Overlay zoning.
 - Will continue discussion during Feb meeting.
 - NRCC Strategic Planning, continued
 - Tabled
 - Exec Session for Conservation projects
 - None
 - Updates/New Business
 - None
 - Adjourn – 9:40
 - Jon motions, Don seconds 8-0 (Bob left earlier).