

Meeting Minutes (Feb. 2023)

Natural Resources and Conservation Committee

6:30 PM Wednesday February 8, 2022

AGENDA

Attending: Gail Albert, Don Rendall, Jon Cocina, Bob Paquin, Fred Morgan, Sean MacFaden, Mike Schramm, Chandler Noyes, Christine Haines, Mike Schramm; From the public: P. Worrall, Donna Fialkoff, Craig Heindel (Ferrisburgh Conservation Commission Chair), Aaron Worthley & Jeff Parsons from Arrowwood Environmental

- Call SNRCC meeting to Order (6:30)
- Identify minute taker – Chandler (6:31-6:32)
- Review and approve agenda (6:32-6:34) Motion by Don second by Jon & Bob passed unanimously
- Review and approve minutes of January 11 (6:34-6:35) Tabled
- Public Comment (6:35-6:39) None
- Meet with Ferrisburgh Conservation Chair Craig Heindel (6:40-7:00)
 - Ferrisburgh did re-write in 2017.
 - CH: Zoning regs are supposed to implement town plan. Engaged Brandy Saxton (sp?) to help with re-write. Don't want zoning regs to go beyond what is in the town plan because that can be challenged [in court].
 - CH: Again, suggested by-laws *must* be linked to / supported by the town plan.
 - Gail: Town plan only visionary.
 - CH: Got advice from Addison county planning commission. Created ad hoc committee and worked with consultant (Brandy) to go step-by-step through the regs.
 - Don: Something like 250 action items in our town plan. As commission, do you have more powers than our committee?
 - CH: Not sure how your town/committees work. *emailed SNRCC document explaining how conservation commission can be formed*
 - CH: Way their commission is active is by providing information/comment on every zoning application. Planning Commission & Zoning Board are receptive to the Conservation Commission.

- CH: In each zoning district, there are permitted and conditional uses; permitted requires oversight.
- CH: Have 2-3 educational events throughout the year (e.g., wildlife, water quality, etc.)
- CH: Focus on natural resource components, very specifically go through the six sections in the zoning regs and whether an application before the commission follows them.
- Don: *inaudible*
- Gail: Do your regs have very different zoning within the town?
- CH: Yes; five or six different zones (village, rural, commercial, etc.), have slightly different set of regs, permitted / conditional uses
- Don: So you guys do detailed review of applications, and then recommend how PC should proceed?
- CH: They usually listen to input. For example, reminding PC about a specific reg that needs to be followed (e.g., 50-foot riparian buffer)
- Gail: Our PC not *required* to meet with us
- CH: Their Conservation Commission on email list so that they receive all applications right away (allows them time to review/comment)
- Gail: Did Brandy write your regulations?
- CH: She worked with the ad hoc committee and provided guidance throughout the re-write process.
- Don: Did you get any other town involvement?
- CH: One of the first things the ad hoc committee did was put out a survey for the town to get input from the public.
- CH: In many towns, instead of just the Select Board making final decision, town has put it out to a full town vote.
- AW: Does your commission review both conditional and permitted projects?
- CH: Yes, to make sure all conditions are formally addressed.
- JP: Has your town plan be re-written to include Act 171?
- CH: No, re-write was completed prior to its passage. Town plan expires soon, so during next update will need to incorporate Act 171.
- Don: Taylor from CCRPC left some comments for us to build on that we need to address.
- CH: Language of town plan needs to be very objective and clear; not “loose”
- Gail: Our town’s regulations are contradictory at some points, confusing, not clear.
- Jon: inaudible... appears to be asking CH about riparian buffers in their plan?
- CH: Ferrisburgh’s town plan, zoning regs on their website. Everyone on their ad hoc committee was very pleased with the guidance Brandy provided.
- No additional comments from Christine, Sean, Donna
- Fred: Population difference, hunger for development, less enthusiasm for land

conservation in Shelburne vs Ferrisburgh

- AW: It needs to be in the regulations in order to be enforced.
- *Move over to Planning Commission Meeting* (7:05)
- Join Planning Commission for Arrowwood presentation (7:05-7:55)
 - Final report & mapping product: <https://arrowwoodvt.com/shelburneforestblocks>
 - Task: Identification, inventory, and assessment of forested wildlife habitat in the Town of Shelburne in relation to Act 171.
 - Prior work by VT ANR, F&W, previous mapping efforts significantly underestimate Shelburne's habitat. On the other hand, forest patch analysis from 2016 tends to overestimate.
 - 49 habitat blocks identified in Shelburne by Arrowwood. Town of Shelburne + 1km surrounding town boundaries (more adequately reflects connectivity).
 - 11 parameters used to score habitat blocks (e.g., size, % forested, etc); specific to Shelburne, so can't be extrapolated elsewhere (e.g., S. Burlington).
 - Important to note that this was predominantly completed remotely.
 - Final ranking helps answer part of Act 171; but there are more nuanced habitat blocks, that while small, are still very important. Provide the stepping stone / stopover point in between their home ranges... i.e., don't discount the smaller habitat blocks!
 - Results of the work are provided online; see link above. Clicking on a habitat block (on the map) brings up the information on that particular block.
 - PC member: How do we use the information? What metric do we want to recognize, such that we make effective/impactful decisions vs 'making ourselves feel good'
 - Gail: Can we get a demo on how the map could be used to help inform development decision?
 - AW: Examine the primary areas that aren't already conserved—Shelburne Pond, LaPlatte are already mostly conserved. So, look at the corridors and habitat blocks away from these regions.
 - JP: For example, western habitat blocks are very vulnerable. If development comes up here, think of how design can be completed to protect these areas (e.g., adding buffers, no upwards pointing lights, clustering construction). There are ways other than complete prohibition to protect the habitat blocks.
 - PC member: Do we have a way of knowing what lands in Shelburne are conserved and to what degree?
 - Gail: This info is in the Open Space Plan.
 - AD: Has copies of OSP; maps with land that is conserved.
 - Gail: There are levels of conservation. Perpetual agreements vs. agreements with

land developers (e.g., land along LaPlatte where condos constructed)

- PC member: Is there anything particularly significant that stands out to you (Arrowwood)?
- AW: Bobcat important/significant to the Shelburne area. Unusual for the area; wouldn't really encounter them to the north (i.e., S. Burlington).
- JP: Otters as well.
- Mark Pennington: Focusing on 'habitat blocks' which is a different definition / requirements within Act 171. For example, your study doesn't include at riparian corridors. Where do we go from here in the process? Is it possible to integrate some citizen science? Moving forward to get public comment, address other areas required within Act 171.
- JP: In order to apply this through zoning regulations, there needs to be stipulations in the town plan referring to the work completed (by Arrowwood).

- Stay with PC for reg rewrite discussion (7:56-8:55)

- Adjourn

- Completion of agenda (8:56 or on)