

Shelburne Natural Resources Committee meeting of May 10, 2023

Attendees: Don, Fred (note taker), Jon, Sean, Christine

Other attendees: Mark Pennington, Percy Worrell

Side note : need to post on FPF about a committee opening

(We started without a quorum and then had a quorum later)

1. Looking at maps with Sean: His points

A series of analyses that we can perform with new data from Arrowood. Help to develop a mechanism under Act 171 to guide us through the data.

Looking at forest patches that were identified. Included are data points that describe the blocks. Allowed blocks to be ranked one to forty-nine.

Town can use the data when it considers development or conservation. Shades of green reveal which blocks have more core forest.

Onto agricultural fields and wetlands on map. Biodiversity supports wildlife.

We want to know how development will affect wildlife. Common land not included in maps as could be sold off.

Maps reveal land that has some kind of protection. Conserved lands, and lands protected in perpetuity.

2. Responses to presentation:

P Worrall has questions about how well land is protected in town.

Town could use some of the lands if wanted to. Discussion of how well conserved are land that has an easement. Intention is that easement lands are forever protected. Nevertheless, could be developed. Town owned lands are not protected by a specific mechanism.

Always possible if town wants to develop land, it could. If third party own development rights, might have some protection.

Shoreline development and overlay limitations.

Looking at zoning districts. Different rules in different districts.

Forest patches in residential development. Forest patches in sewer districts.

Many forest patches not in protected areas. And forest patches that are not protected.
Wildlife corridors heavily parcelized.

SNRCC will bring their ideas of protection to the Planning Commission.

What are other towns doing. What is legally defensible in the possible protection of forest blocks.

Mark Pennington question.

How to go about protecting less conspicuous blocks or important blocks.

Sean responds.

Threshold for preservation of blocks is not clear. Hope there is a more coherent and wholistic approach to preserving forest blocks. Developers and land owners want simplicity but simplicity is not going to be the way to preservation.

PWorrall:

Question on flood zones and waterways.

Sean;

Not supposed to build in those areas. Some building was done in those areas in the past however.

PWorrall: How can we get hold of these maps.

Sean;

They are available. A link could be made available. What's available may not be as detailed as what we have been looking at.

All data publicly available.

Sean: additional analyses possible but clicking on or off data sets.

Regional planning commission will make data available.

Which data should be made publicly available to make for better town planning.

Don: how are we to decide which data to make most prominent, give more regulatory protection?

Sean; Need to look again at Act 171. Need to see what other towns are doing about the act.

Don: Land owners in some plans allowed some leeway. Mitigation and permits necessary. South Burlington model is useful.

PWorrall: South Burlington has run in to some legal challenges. Waitsfield and other towns may have done things which would be a useful model.

M. Pennigton.

Wants to see what the reaction to proposals is

Jon; lots information to work with. Info is power. How can we educate the public? May be key in the maps in gaining acceptance.

P. Worrall:

Use community values as a means to gain some consensus in finding a direction

Don.

A motion to use community values as a means to gain to gain an approach to future planning. Derived from Act 171.

Vote: unanimous

Don: general discussion

Renaming Open Space Plan to Open Space Conservation plan has been tabled by the Select Board until new Town Manager is on board.

Also. Need vigilance on protecting the open space fund

Sean;

On the idea of developing a land trust. Has to be separate entity. Not the realm of a town committee. People are casting about for funds, and those funds seem like a target.

Jon:

Are parcels of undeveloped land big enough to form a land trust, or to be interesting to a land trust. Maybe not.

Mark:

To develop a land trust requires a significant amount of time from people.

Sean:

Small land trust in charlotte and s. Burlington enabled by someone able to draw funds in. Increasingly hard to attract people in Shelburne to this idea. Adept at the ask. Writing grants. Federal and state funding possible. The money we currently have is only seed money.

Funding will be left to some sort of campaign. One way of doing it.

Don: Arpa committee voted that funds should be directed to the open space fund.

Approach to upcoming planning commission meeting. Planning commission reg changes can be seen on line. Or at least plans for regulatory changes.

Don focused on how regs differ from town plan. Need familiarity with town regs.

Mark: Sean's maps very helpful in visualizing shape of land development.

Christine: question of getting community meetings. How could it be done

PWorrall:

Way current plan talks of land does not seem current

Percy: Brings up issues with Act 100. Overrides where there is sewer and water available.

Sean:

High density development where possible but we have the La Platte and brooks
Have to recognize the complexity.

Don:

Bring in folks to educate us on flora, fauna, geology, etc. new presentations at our meetings.

All in favor to conclude meeting