

Plainfield Conservation Commission
Meeting Minutes 15 January 2014

Present: Sarah Albert, Becky Buchanan, Charlie Cogbill, Becky Cushing, Kate Harper, Jan Waterman
Absent: Julie Hackbarth

Minutes: Minutes from December meeting approved as corrected.

Shoreline Protection: Becky C. went to the statehouse hearing on shoreline protection last week; the proposed bill would increase protection around bodies of water in the state by requirements such as wider vegetation buffers, increased building setbacks, and restrictions on removal of woody debris. Participants were evenly divided pro & con; people were worried about costs, whether it would interfere w/ Eurasian milfoil removal efforts on some lakes.

Water Quality Protection: Becky B. brought information about the VT State/US EPA Lake Champlain Phosphorous Reduction and Restoration Plan, which draws attention to the high levels of pollution in the lake, the sources of and ways to reduce phosphorous levels and other pollutants in the water. Sources include municipal stormwater runoff, road runoff and erosion, unstable stream channels, runoff from logging, agricultural runoff – even improper disposal of animal waste (dogs, horses, etc.) Kari Dolan, from the state watershed management office, presented info at CVRPC last night. Comments on the plan are invited through January 17th. See: http://www.watershedmanagement.vt.gov/erp/champlain/docs/TMDL_public_mtg_pres_Nov_27_Final.pdf

Forest Management Plan for town forest: Sarah gave us a progress report. Redstart sent two people (Mike Scott and Courtney Haynes) to the town forest recently to mark trees for cutting. Sarah will continue to oversee this project.

Tree and Shrub Sale: We reviewed dates and process. Brochures will be ready as usual by town meeting day. The deadline to order will be April 7th; pickup date will be April 26th; and sale preparation will be done in two shifts for improved efficiency, at Ross & Warren's barn as usual, during afternoon of the 25th.

Town Plan: Jan reported that a final draft is very close to a vote by the Selectboard.

Forest Stewardship process continues at CVRPC. Jan reported on the most recent meeting and discussion, which focused on anthropogenic threats to the forests in Vermont, with a presentation by Emma Zavez, VNRC planner. This coming year, CVRPC will try to correlate the information received during this past year, and create a regional forest stewardship plan that will provide the hoped-for results, and avoid unintended consequences.

Natural Communities Survey: Not much progress on finding sources of grant funding for the survey recently, but Jan continues to peck away at it. The Selectboard is considering allocating some amount for matching funds, so they'll be available when we do get a grant.

LittleWood Farm: Joey Klein extended an informal request that the conservation commission help upgrade the riverside trail on the farm, and establish public access to it. We discussed some issues: flood debris deposited on the bank, blocking the trail (flood mitigation issue, written State permit required to remove); parking; signage; insurance/liability; vandalism concerns. Kate will follow up with Joey and Betsy to arrange a "field trip" for us in the spring, so we can walk the trail with them and see what's important to them.

Town Website: We discussed benefits of posting more conservation-related information on the town website; the past difficulties with the website; and questions about how/whether we could help improve the "use-ability" of the site without making more work for the town clerk. Suggestions: VLCT, the Secretary of State or town clerks association may offer assistance. It was proposed that, for starters, we each review a few other towns' websites and come to our next meeting with one or two of our favorites, compare, and then see who designed them.

Pet Waste Signage/Education: Becky B. and Becky C. both noted EPA, State and other municipalities' mandates and efforts on this issue. Kate will investigate the availability and pricing of "off the shelf" and custom designed educational signs from Work Safe – a local sign maker.

Gore Road conservation easement question: This refers to a question from Mountain Birdwatch (bird monitoring project in NY, VT, NH and ME) who asked about parking permission and access to Burnt Mountain for their annual June surveys. Becky C. will contact Rose Paul of TNC and/or Jonathan Decker, VLT to find out who owns the easement at the end of Gore Road, which is the access point the group is interested in using.

Education – Trees in Public Right of Way: Sarah will compose a short informational piece about this, and circulate the draft or bring it to our next meeting.

Municipal Day: at National Life, March 31, sponsored by ANR in order to "enhance the Agency's service to our municipal partners by increasing our education and outreach efforts." More info on this to come.

Trails Grant: Next deadline for grant application is Feb. 28. Sarah is on top of it.

Land Use and Housing Priorities Re-imagined: a presentation titled "Co-location, Co-location, Co-location," at VT Law School on Feb. 13th. Sarah and Becky C. intend to attend.

Next meeting: February 19, at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Jan Waterman, Secretary
Plainfield Conservation Commission