

Plainfield Conservation Commission

June 15, 2016

PRESENT: Sarah Albert, Charlie Cogbill, Mary Trerice, Kate Harper

7:20 Convene

Minutes of May meeting were approved

Natural Communities Inventory Report: After our last meeting, where we decided to use some of our budget to print copies of the report, Jan arranged to have that done. She also distributed some of these, as earlier decide: one to the Selectboard, one to the Planning Commission, one to the Cutler Library, and one for us. Of the remaining four, we decided that one should be available through Linda, for in-house perusal. We will also ask her about having one “circulating” copy that town residents could borrow. We also wondered if some state agency would like to have one.

Question of creating our own Commission website: Kate raised this question because both Bram Tobin and Dave Strong mentioned it as a possible solution to the problem created by posting the Natural Communities Inventory Report on the Town website. That posting is so large that it has “maxed out” all the space available on our page on the current website. But none of us felt that this would be a good use of our time at this point.

We do plan to ask Delia what she thinks it would take to do a quick “Wordpress” or other freebie type of site, but in the meantime, Kate will email Bram and Dave to encourage the Town to explore starting over with a new, more user-friendly website. And we will also explore the possibility of having some other agency (i.e. the Vermont League of Cities and Towns or the Natural Heritage Program at Fish and Wildlife or the Regional Planning Commission) allow us to temporarily “park” the inventory report with them and provide a link to that from the existing website. And maybe Jens would have a suggestion.

Resiliency Project Meeting: Charlie attended this meeting and told us a bit about what happened there. Much of the focus was on doing more to put an advisory committee together. So far, the project is developing a three-prong approach: 1. Riparian planting on the Recreation Field bank, 2. Tear down the existing shelter near that bank, and 3. Community Building.

Town Forest: Trail head project: Sarah reported that she has contacted 4 or 5 contractors, soliciting bids, but has received only one so far. The Selectboard will have to decide whether they want to try for more bids before a contractor is chosen.

Conserving the Town Forest: After discussion, we agreed that there is a low need for this action at this point.

Planning work day for identifying and removing invasives: High priority now that so much of the canopy has been removed in certain areas. We tentatively set July 10 or 17, both Sundays, and will confirm one (or one as the work day and the second as the rain date.) We will send out an email, specifically to verify what will work for the largest number of us.

Rain Garden update: Kate reported that she had again been in touch with Bram, and checked the rain garden a couple of weeks ago. It had been dug out, a very nice job by Mike and his crew, who carefully removed the sludge that Kate and Shawn and dug as a test to see if removing some of it would allow the standing water to drain down. The Town crew dug quite deep, as we suggested, and did it all without compromising the stone barrier that defines the forebay. It did help, and we will just have to wait and see what the season will bring. Also, if anyone feels moved to help remove some of the maple tree seedlings that have come in, many on the border of the rain garden, it would be very helpful.

Wetland Permit issue: We discussed this permit situation to clarify just what was at stake, and whether the Conservation Commission had a role here. No action taken, but we encourage attendance at the June 22 hearing for anyone who is interested.

Jens Hilke Feedback for Plainfield regarding zoning and inventory report: We discussed how to proceed now that we have this very useful feedback from Jens (see his long May 23 email). We decided that it would be very helpful to sit down with him at some point, and also to ask him, now, to point us in the right direction regarding the “definitions” he mentioned in that email. Kate will ask him to send us some ideas for finding language that other towns have used, and Sarah will begin working with that information as soon as she receives those “leads.”

Kate will also email Will to say that we would strongly urge a more relaxed time line for getting to a Town vote on the new zoning recommendations, with the 2017 Town Meeting as the new target for that vote. We all feel that a September date will, at this point, leave too little time for the zoning revisions to be handled with the thoroughness they deserve. And they are simply too important to leave until next time. There is lots of momentum now, and we feel that needs to be taken into consideration.

Letter to Selectboard regarding timing of zoning regs adoption: We agreed that we would write such a letter only if we and the Planning Commission are not in agreement regarding our sense of the timing of when the final vote should occur.

New Agriculture Regs: Charlie introduced this new agenda item, just to let us know that as of July 1, there will be some new regs coming into effect that will be more strict in regard to agriculture-related practices.

Mail: We received a letter from Jonathan Decker of the Vermont Land Trust informing us that he has taken a new position in Washington state with the Great Peninsula Conservancy. He also gave us the name and contact information of the new Regional Stewardship Manager, Sumana Serchan, at Summa@vlt.org. Phone is (802) 861-0310.

Adjourn: 8:59

Respectfully submitted by Kate Harper, Chair
Next meeting: July 20, 2016, 7:15 p.m.