

Shelburne Working Group on Human-Wildlife Interactions Meeting Minutes – May 7, 2020

Next Meeting: in about two weeks

Present: Don Rendall, Sharon McNair, Michael Ashooh, Jon Cocina, Lisa Vear, Josh Dein, Jim White .

Facilitator: Don Rendall

Notes: Jim White

1. Motion to approve agenda approved.
2. Unable to approve minutes of February 13 meeting because too few committee members present. Will accept minutes from two meetings next time.
3. Public comment: no public comments

4. Discussion of Shelburne Natural Resources & Conservation Committee (SNRCC) policy amendment proposal with respect to subdivision zoning regulations. Don explained that a subcommittee of the SNRCC is currently drafting amendments to existing zoning regulations and subdivision regulations so they conform to the new town Comprehensive Plan and more fully take into account natural resources concerns. The SNRCC acts in an advisory capacity to the select board and to the development review board. The draft they are working on will go to the full SNRCC committee, probably by May, and then on to the planning commission. The planning commission will eventually pass their results on to the Select Board for approval as law.

When development preliminary proposals of larger properties are submitted to the town, the SNRCC is one of many interested parties who reviews the proposals and submits a letter rejecting, accepting, or accepting with conditions. The DRB utilizes this input as it sees fit to be guided by it.

The subdivision regs have a policy section and the SNRCC draft now includes language about protected wildlife including a brief policy statement. The hope is that the new language will give the SNRCC more power to protect wildlife habitat and other natural resources from the impacts of developments. Don read the added policy language to the group, and it is quoted below:

110.3 Land to be subdivided shall not disturb or impair wildlife habitat and corridors, rare and endangered plant species, water resources including vernal pools, identified views and forests all as defined in Sean's map and denoted in the Table of Protected Resources are the important resources to be preserved in the face of declining wildlife habitat in Shelburne. Land to be subdivided shall not also disturb or impair prime agricultural soils or soils with high infiltration capability.

Question -- would it be best for the policy we are drafting to conform to the SNRCC draft, or will they each stand alone? This question was further discussed in the next part of the meeting.

5. Discussion of draft based on Jackson Hole model. Don and Jim reviewed the status of the JH model as it has been adapted so far (pretty minimally) to Shelburne. Josh pointed out the JH doc is very broad in orientation, like the SNRCC draft; it doesn't focus on animal co-existence. Sharon agreed but said there is good stuff in the JH model.

Mike liked the structure of JH with principles and concerns listed. Likes it as a vision statement of

stewardship. Says our goal is to come up with co-existence principles. Doesn't know how to deal with the broadness of JH, which is broader in scope than what we originally discussed. He noted that municipalities can't regulate agricultural animals in VT but can state intentions (Sharon later said that inability to regulate ag stuff is very disappointing to her). Mike said maybe we could present a document to SNRCC and see how they incorporate it.

Jon said there is a lot in the JH document that we can make work, and its broadness offers a parallel to SNRCC. Maybe have three categories: 1) preventive, 2) co-existence (get specific) and 3) restorative (making the community even more habitable for wildlife).

Sharon stated that the policy we are developing at the more specific detail level ought to pay attention to keystone species and that they be specifically followed as measures of the health of the ecosystem. She mentioned beaver, snowshoe hare and bald eagle.

Lisa expressed concern that the DRB rarely takes the SNRCC letters seriously. Said her experience is that developers do the right thing when they are forced to. Wants something that will hold DRB's feet to the fire. Don said developers in line with our thinking will listen and adapt each project. Jon said that some developers listen and adapt, but we do need teeth, so we need specificity about protecting wildlife. Mike cited a couple of factors that play into this. One is how policy ideas are implemented and the other is the democratic process. Said fact is that VT is a hugely pro-landowner state, and hard to regulate that. But he is not as pessimistic. Thinks DRB listens to SNRCC. Asks - are we getting beyond the scope of our project? Our goal is a more conscious approach to human-wildlife interactions. Noted that he is in an odd position because as a SB member, he can't comment on a policy and then vote on it.

Mike asked if we need to understand what the SRNCC is doing, and figure out if we dovetail with that or go independently? Should we talk with the SRNCC? Don said he saw common ground, but one SNRCC goal is more power vis-a-vis developers. Mike suggested we work on our draft to bring more focus and clarity and then take it to SRNCC and ask if it fits in with what they are doing?

Discussion of practical issues around working more on the draft. Mike has zoom account. Don says we can put the doc up on the town website for everyone to edit. Mike says be sure to sign in before editing. Don will ask Betty at town hall how to fix the doc so everyone can edit. Sharon says be sure to use "suggested edits" so all can see before and after versions.

The document can now be found for individuals to enter their comments after signing in at:

<https://www.shelburnevt.org/DocumentCenter/View/4594/Shelburne-Animal-Coexistence-Policy--Draft>

Other business. Jim suggested that the group keep in mind the idea out there to pave Pond Rd. It brings together a number of our themes -- threatened species, vital habitat, transportation, corridors, human-wildlife interactions, ways to intervene to protect wildlife. Maybe use the issue as a touchstone for evaluating the policy we create. Will it offer any practical value to dealing with the Pond Rd matter? If not, what's it worth?

Don raised the issue of beaver activity in McCabe Brook in David Park. There was an anonymous complaint. Sharon asks are there really beaver there, or do the culverts need to be cleaned out? People only assume it's beavers if there is a problem. Paul seemed to indicate that culvert cleaning was now our problem. He is incorrect about that. The job is his to do. Sharon said we could get someone in to

look at the situation. Skip, John Aberth? Maybe Josh?

Jim mentioned he had been in touch with Jens Hawkins-Hilke at Dept of Fish & Wildlife. Jens focuses on working with municipalities. Don said he knows Jens and has worked with him on projects. Might make sense to invite Jens to a meeting at some point.