

# *Meeting Agenda*

## **Natural Resources and Conservation Committee**

Conducted online Meeting ID: 839 1903 0637 Password: 9cGuE5

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83919030637?pwd=VzNWMFV6VDhJdldKdkd3QUdrRUIDZz09\\*](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83919030637?pwd=VzNWMFV6VDhJdldKdkd3QUdrRUIDZz09*)

Call in number 929 205 6099\* Meeting ID: 839 1903 0637 Password: 578458

**Wednesday, June 1, 2020**

In attendance: Peg Rosenau, Sean McFaden, Don Rendall, Gail Albert, Fred Morgan, Mike Schramm, Jon Cocina, Bob Paquin, Dean Pierce, Jim Pease (Clean Water Initiative Program, Water Investment Division, VTDEC)

- Call to Order: – 7:05
- Preliminary matters– 7:00 -7:20
- Identify minute taker – Don agreed to take minutes
  
- Approve agenda – Don made a motion to approve the agenda with added VYCC item, Bob seconded, all approved.
- May 13 meeting minutes – Mike questioned the wording on page 3 “AOT would likely want to limit the traffic in this area and would limit Shagbark as the sole road to service CLS development” saying this is not an accurate expectation. Dean indicated that the statement could be interpreted in two ways and that certainly VTran would expect more traffic from the CLS development to utilize the Longmeadow intersection with the four way light given a street connection from Shagbark, the intended sole access road. Fred made a motion to approve this comment addition to the minutes, Mike seconded, all approved (except Jon recused).
- May 19 meeting minutes – Bob moved to approve, Peg seconded all approved (except Mike recused).
- No public comment
- Discussion of Water Quality issues with Jim Pease: Jim gave a biological report card regarding the stream health of water courses in Shelburne. There is a great deal of data available both biological and chemical which is processed in a lab in Randolph (formerly Waterbury). Shelburne data yields a mixed health report card with some problems due to development. Bartlett Brook (with a small presence in Shelburne) has been monitored since 1993 (last sampled in 2018). Stormwater flushing causes loss of key species and high sediment levels during events caused by the high water volume and flows. Macrovertebrates especially May Fly and Stone Fly are flushed out in the big storms. Fish population can suffer but is mostly pretty good since 2004. The stream has a fair amount of phosphorous loading and South Burlington is building new treatment ponds. Munroe Brook is measured at the mouth, by the railroad and at Spear Street. For the last 17 years, it has been mostly fair in its biology conditions but is lacking in clean water

species because habitat gets flushed away. Macrovertebrates surviving are not edible by the fish and invertebrates and worms available are not attractive to the fish. Needs flow and velocity controls. Fish are lacking at the railroad so poor at this location but the brook meets or almost meets standards at Spear. Near the Hulcrest area stream biology is fair to poor but improving now with new control projects. It has some phosphorus.

McCabes does not have many samples in history but is fair in its biology (although not many species it is better than Munroe). Below Harbor Road it does not meet standards, is not diverse and suffers some enrichment. Fish population here is hard to assess. At Bostwick Road the macrocommunity is fair but less than Munroe.

LaPlatte is too big for biologists to sample well so must go upstream. At Shelburne Falls – good. Unlike other rivers in Vermont, the LaPlatte is not so impaired by industry, sewer systems or farm runoff so is generally healthy but meets standards. The river does export a lot of phosphorus to Shelburne Bay.

What most accounts for the conditions of the small streams' conditions is the volume and velocity of storm water. The geomorphology of stream channels impacted, and only tolerant species maintain while the rest get flushed.

The state tries to test every three to five years. How much is stormwater problems from development versus climate change? Not sure. Impervious cover is increasing impacting habitat, streams are scoured with increased flow. How to rebuild habitat? More trees on stream banks to control erosion (use YCC) and increase shade for temperature control. Manmade storm water structures can't replace nature so we need to maximize the filtration that can happen by soils and vegetation. Best soils are A,B but are often lost to the flows and they remove phosphorus. Vergennes clay (and Cornington) are old lake bottom soils are bad for streams as the sediment stays suspended for long durations in stream waters.

The State's municipal road permit system is having an effect driving towns to improve streams.

Mike reported the Select Board had adopted a new Storm Water Ordinance creating a Utility.

- No Development Review/Requests for Section 600 letter. There was some discussion about the Town managing its growth rate. The rate ebbs and flows and is in a growth phase now. The DRB measures especially whether a project should go forward based on the Town's capacity of services to service the project.
- Don led a discussion of Subdivision Regulation Amendments
  - Don kicked off the conversation looking for feedback on the proposed edits
  - Bob asked about the status of Sean's maps, which are referenced throughout
  - Don reminded that the important thing is that our language must be specific enough to describe exactly what needs to be protected and why and that the resources can be pinpointed on a map.
  - Eventually we will need to rename "Sean's map"
  - Don highlighted that he used as many of our previously created "definitions" as possible into a comment for the new Table. There are still gaps and there is help needed in making the definitions better.
  - Sean - commented that the maps should be named to highlight the purpose of the map.

- Also mentioned that there are lots of approaches we could take in terms of creating the maps and identifying what is important. For example, the State provides a general approach on forests, saying that towns should conserve at least two blocks of substantial habitat (cumulatively 1000 acres). This might provide some logic that we could scale for Shelburne as we look at the distribution of forests here. Sean sees the forest patch issue as the question we need to answer first.
  - Dean - mentioned that a small grant program available to help communities with forest integrity planning. Available to help Shelburne write or update part of Town Plan. When the Town Plan was updated the Natural Resources section was determined to meet the standards of Act 171. This could help our committee get technical assistance.
  - Gail asked how this grant could be used. Dean said it may help with prioritization. For example, it could help with clarification of the table that is in the updated subdivision language. Believes we need a tighter focus on the most important resources. If everything is important, nothing is important.
  - Suggestion - In the table, the next thing needed is to add a column for an objective. It will help explain why the resource is important. Should there be a focus on Indicator (or Umbrella) species; do what we can to conserve these and many other species are aided.
  - Sean - mentioned how competing interests in the Town Plan, which informs the regulations framework. For example, development should be clustered near transportation corridors. Developers argue by developing in forest patches they are protecting viewscales. To make a difference, we will need to focus on the truly most important things. Personal bias is to prioritize forest blocks.
  - Bob talked about challenges of going macro to micro. Start with large conservation efforts and then we discuss specific small development projects. How do you translate landscape vision for small recommendations on private property? This is a real issue.
  - Don said that by drafting these amendments we will achieve more power.
  - Don questioned whether we may want to focus on keystone species as an indicator? Should there be a focus on Indicator (or Umbrella) species; do what we can to conserve these and many other species are aided.
  - Don asked if we should keep looking at section 800 going forward? Gail said that we'll need to actually focus on it over the next month. Asked for a commitment from the committee.
  - **Next Step - Committee agreed that the focus will be on section 800 and will also support definition development.**
- 8:33 Gail discussed the Select Board hearing on the Town Budget where they learned of difficulties caused by the Covid virus. Revenues are expected to decline from the budgeted forecast and expenses will have to be cut. How will this impact SNRCC's interest's? Is the Open Space Fund vulnerable? These have been specifically voted by the people for this specific purpose but could the fund's monies be borrowed for other uses? Dean explained that the Town is required to pay school funding even if taxpayers cannot meet the revenue goal. This further impacts what monies remain for the Town budget.

Gail asked members to think about this and be prepared to discuss in greater detail next month.

- Other Updates:
  - Don reported on the Animal Coexistence group's efforts to craft a draft policy. A working document is being refined but the subcommittee wants to meet with the NRCC next month to get direction on how to further shape the draft.
  - Sean continues working on maps and the language used by them.
  - Route 7 wastewater The Select Board indicated it will find \$20,000 for engineering plans to accomplish the needed upgrade to the sewer system. It will further try to find funds to reimburse for this expense.
  - Chittenden Regional Conservation Planning and mapping have been on hold since March – no new developments.
- Conservation Projects – nothing to report.
- Other Business
  - Gail reported that VYCC is available for tree planting projects if someone can identify needy locations. Discussion centered on erosion control projects on the streams. Dean suggested follow up could be made with Jim Pease if he has knowledge about possible locations.
  - Dean discussed the Town's use of "Open Space Agreements" between a landowner who is developing land and the Town to conserve certain open spaces. Currently there are about 30 in place. He will share the OSP which was worked out with the Meunier's. These documents help prevent bad things from happening on these lands as a backstop. Dean indicated that the Town Manager is considering changing the form.
- 9:15 Jon moved to adjourn the meeting, Bob seconded and all approved.

Submitted by Don Rendall