

Meeting Minutes
Shelburne Natural Resources and Conservation Committee
Wednesday November 11, 2020
7:00 PM, via Zoom

Attending: Peg Rosenau (taking minutes) Gail Albert, Sean Macfaden, Mike Schramm, Fred Morgan, Chandler Noyes, Dean Pierce (staff), Myra Handy (Lewis Creek Assn), Kate Kelly (LCA) Don Rendall (arrived at 7:30)

- Call to order: 7:05 by Gail Albert, chair
- Words of appreciation for former member Susan Moegenburg; she passed away on October 20, 2020.
- Agenda: Move to approve: Fred Morgan, second: Gail Albert, all in favor
- October Minutes: Move to approve: Fred, second: Mike, all in favor except Peg who abstained (absent from Oct meeting)
- Discussion of Water Quality with members of Lewis Creek Association

Kate Kelly (Lewis Creek Assn program manager) presenting. Pollution in Lake Champlain costs 115 million per year in impacts. Every town on the water shed needs to be “all in” to fix the problem. Most phosphorus comes from agriculture and development. Flooding is more common due to climate change. Important river management principles include: moving buildings out of flood zones and reconnect rivers with floodplain, slow the flow by allowing meanders, leave natural sediments in stream beds to prevent down-cutting and bank erosion. What’s being done in VT? Encouraging volunteer conservation, monitoring water quality, stream restoration projects, etc. What can town boards and commissions do? Increase river setbacks, design for climate change (above and beyond current standards), upgrade roads for larger storms, apply design principles of general permits to driveways and private roads (not just public roads), protect natural areas of high public value, mitigate existing development, manage individual homesteads for water quality, support the work of LCA and other orgs working to protect water quality.

- Development Review

No requests for section 600 letters

Update: Whalley project is progressing- may be scaled back from original plan, but nothing confirmed

Sterling project on Gardenside is also moving to completion in planning process

Gail had recently attended a DRB meeting and has concerns about blasting at the former Rice Lumber site, on some of the proposed lots to create a cliff. It was approved by DRB. Still uncertainty about the scope of the entire project. Something to keep on our radar.

- Journal Article and Webinar concerning local chloride pollution

Recent data has shown that chloride pollution is entering the water (Laplatte) from the VT Railway salt shed. There is concern about the amount of salt going into the river. Webinar on December 9th (sponsored by Sea Grant- registration required) where this will be discussed. Gail shared the article with data information (Environmental Systems Research: "Assessment of deicing salt storage and distribution as a salinization point source: the influence of permitting standards on water quality"). Drafting a letter from SNRCC was considered. Some discussion ensued about the purpose of the letter. Some recommended going directly to the selectboard to alert them to concerns about possible chloride pollution. Idea floated that members of the SNRCC attend the next selectboard meeting to inform them about webinar and data. Sean asked if the railroad had responded to the data findings and how the federal oversight of the project would impact what could be done. Chandler suggested we approach their liaison in an amenable way to see if we can get more info. Decision was made to forward relevant info to selectboard to let them know about the study and the upcoming webinar. Dean will forward on the committee's behalf. Peg Moved, Gail seconded. All in favor.

- Animal Coexistence Working Group Policy

Could be put on the town website for consideration/input. Sean commented that the document focused on things the town can control- but could there be a statement to encourage all residents to support on private lands as well? Gail appreciated the resource list. Gail wondered who would be the responsible party to be the overseer- especially as the document mentions SNRCC and yet this does not seem to be our purview. There seems to be a very large number of different situations that require different talents/attention. Gail asked about their qualifications and had concerns about SNRCC doing this job. Dean asked when selectboard was last represented at these discussions. Don guessed May- but they were observers, not subcommittee members. The document will seem new to the selectboard and may take some time to review. It will probably take quite a bit of discussion/involvement before it is adopted. Mike asked about definition of "best practices" and if will they be developed by another entity. Don indicated that they are for the town to develop. Don asked that any additional comments be submitted ASAP.

- Updates:

Mapping/Forest Integrity: Sean: Dean and Taylor met about prospects re: improving the mapping. Sean will prepare the data set. Dean suggested extending until January or even Feb so that we could continue to work directly with Taylor (he can't make the December meeting) and therefore maintain consistency with the process. Committee agreed. Dean will let Taylor know that this plan is a go.

Bylaw change: Don reviewed ranking survey. Almost all members have submitted. Categories ranking highest are: Rare and endangered species sites, Forest Blocks, Wildlife Travel Corridors, and Wetlands.

Report on Audubon Site Visit: Dean attended. Audubon is working with VT Land Trust and the landowner to restore bird habitat at former Nordic Farms in Charlotte. Removing invasives, improving habitat, substantial manipulation of habitat with machinery, etc

Conservation projects: Gail talked recently with Peter Ewing. Project moving slowly ahead.

Other Business: Sean mentioned the active beaver dam on McCabe's brook on Harbor Road. Peg mentioned that the dam has been pulled apart. Members wondered if town public works would employ a "baffle" similar to the one on Monroe Brook

Dean mentioned new policy on housing- intention to is to make more affordable options but it is problematic for other reasons and a lot needs to be ironed out.

- Adjournment: Don moved, Fred second. Meeting adjourned at 9:27