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Rockingham Conservation Commission

MONDAY, July 13th, 2015

7:00 pm

3rd Floor Meeting Room Town Hall

MINUTES:

Present: Tom Herson, Rick Holloway, Mike Ghia, Guy Payne, Peter Bergstrom, Devin Smith, Paul Wilson, Alan Fowler. Absent: Fred Bennett.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

1. Approve Minutes of June Meeting: Alan moved, Rick seconded, passed.

Alteration to the Agenda (none) and Guests Introductions: Guests were Silos Roberts, Pinnacle Assoc., Cambridgeport; Amy Howlett, Saxtons River; Alan Lacombe and Renee Vondle, Rockingham Planning Commission.

2. Recruitment and Logistics

Website updates (Fred and Alan) –none, and Mail Chimp – Mike sent instructions on how to use it to Guy and Peter.

3. Trail Connection possibilities between Bald Hill and Rockingham--Silos Roberts, Pinnacle Association Bald Hill Committee showed us a map of possible trail connections in Rockingham and Westminster. The main possible connection he discussed would be from the Bald Hill trails along Covered Bridge Rd. and old roads to connect to Davidson Hill Rd, and from there to existing trails in Rockingham on the ridge that runs north from Hartley Hill to the Saxtons River. Another possible trail would run from Saxtons River to Cambridgeport. He said the Pinnacle Assoc. is looking for volunteers to research getting permission for hiking trails along these routes. We would need to get an "expanded right or way" to allow walking through to other properties. Pinnacle asks for a "trail license" if they can't get a permanent easement; this can be withdrawn with 30 days' notice. Once a trail was established, we'd need to find volunteer stewards to maintain the trail, preferably folks who live nearby. Pinnacle has liability insurance that covers trails in its network. Mike said the Commission supports this but is not sure we have volunteers able to help at this town. He thought it might work best to start from the Saxtons River end of

the trail, where a new road to a new cell tower may get built starting at the Warner Center. **The Pinnacle Assoc. is planning a meeting in Saxtons River this fall to explain the possible trail and seek volunteers for creating it**, and Mike offered to have the Commission co-sponsor this. Peter moved and Guy seconded that **we co-sponsor the fall organizing meeting**, and Silos will email us an electronic copy of the map he brought of possible trail rail routes.

4. New Town Plan— Alan Lacombe, Chair of the Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC) told us that Rockingham has to prepare a new “flood resilience” section for our town plan. We need to have a new plan adopted by March 2016, and we don’t have time to write a whole new plan, but we need to add this new section. Draft language for the resilience section was forwarded in draft to RCC members recently, including what some other towns have prepared, to seek our comments. The RPC **will discuss again at their next meeting on Wed. July 29**; the public hearings for the new plan need to take place by this December. Q: are there technical resources to help towns with this? A: Towns would probably need to write a grant to get help. Input from anyone is welcome, until they have a hearing draft.

ACTION: RCC members should read through the materials they got for this chapter, and come to the July 29 RPC meeting with any comments. We will discuss again in September, including any other chapters of the Town Plan on which we have comments. RCC members were encouraged to email any comments they have on other chapters to Alan as soon as possible at alan@lacombe.org (with a copy to Mike Ghia and other RCC members).

5. Energy Committee

They are meeting tomorrow night, Tues 7/14, 5:30-6:30 at Main St Arts. Rick, Devin, Alan, and Owen Dodge are on the committee. We will get a report from them in their minutes, to be posted on the RCC web page. They will discuss municipal solar and the PACE initiative. Mike and Renee mentioned that towns can now pass a Solar Screening Policy to influence whether new solar panels need visual screening and setbacks from neighbors. Mike asked that the Energy Committee be part of these discussions.

4. Herrick’s Cove and CT River

Mike mentioned the request for participants in a focus group to discuss the visual impact on the river of the canal bringing water to the hydroelectric plant, as part of the FERC relicensing.

5. Natural Resources

High Meadows Flood Resiliency Grant Follow-up

Peter will find out if we have any funds for tree planting. He mentioned that we have to mention the grant in our Town Report, if we got any funding.

Update on Stream and Water Body Naming Project –Hearings, Mapping, Follow-up

Amy talked to Paul Donovan who just left the Library Board, who described the work the Library Board staff do to research each new name, which can take a long time.

Peter talked to Marty Reid, State Librarian, who said we could probably submit one petition for all 31 changes, but she will check with the Library Board. She also thought we might need a petition even if we got ANR approval for the names; she said she would check on that.

Peter mentioned that he met with the Walpole Cons. Comm. on July 6 and confirmed that they support the name "Great Falls" for the falls in Bellows Falls. They will send him a letter to that effect after consulting with the Walpole Historical Society.

Peter asked Tom if he could bring this up at the next meeting of the CT River Joint Commission, which he will attend. He agreed to bring this up; Peter will send him the background paper he prepared for Walpole.

Recycling and Organic Waste

Alan, Devin and Rick are on this committee, and are working on how the requirements of the new law can be publicized, working with Gary Derosia, Rockingham Recycling Coordinator. They may schedule a library presentation.

Utility Right of Way vegetation control practices

Devin looked into this after a neighbor on Parker Hill was notified of spraying. He also noticed butternut and American chestnut trees in the power line right-of-way, where they appear to be much more common than elsewhere. GMP usually prunes under power lines one year and sprays new growth the following year. Devin asked RCC members for advice on how to proceed. Rick suggested that Devin talk to GMP forestry staff about his concerns for rare trees. **Devin said he would do this.** Guy also mentioned that he will be at a meeting soon of the Windham Regional Woodlands Association, and will ask them about this issue.

7. Confirm Next Meeting NO MEETING IN AUGUST, **NEXT MEETING Monday, Sept. 14th**

Adjourned at 8:57 PM: Peter moved, Mike seconded.

Minutes prepared and submitted by Peter Bergstrom, Secretary, on July 14, 2015.