

Rockingham Conservation Commission (RCC)  
Meeting March 14, 2016

Present: Amy Howlett, Devin Smith, Mike Ghia, Tom Herson, Guy Payne, Paul Wilson.

Mike Ghia called the meeting to order at 7 pm.

**1. Amy moved to approve the minutes of the February meeting. Guy seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

Alteration to the Agenda and Guests Introductions: no alterations, no guests

2. Recruitment and Logistics

Filling Vacancy: Alan Fowler is off the RCC, Paul is continuing. One person has contacted Mike and he is following up by email. The Town usually posts a list of open positions in the Shopper or on the website. RCC members serve a 4-year term, no regulatory powers.

Mail Chimp and general publicity: Mike gave Peter information and the password to work with Mail Chimp, but Peter couldn't get past the security issues. Mike will work on it again. Guy recommended contacting Theresa Spear if there are more issues.

3. Coordination with Planning Commission

Possible Joint Meeting: still in the works. Chuck Wise couldn't make tonight's meeting. The joint meeting might happen in May.

Rewriting the Natural Resources Chapter of Town Plan: technical plan needs to be approved. Planning staff writes the technical plan, according to a recent news article.

4. Follow-up: Trail Connection possibilities between Pinnacle Lands and Rockingham

The RCC plans to organize a hike between Cambridgeport and Saxtons River/Stickney's field. Mike has reached out to Samantha Fletcher at the Snowmobile Club; they are interested. Paul reported no discussion at the Pinnacle board meeting; matter is handled under the Acquisitions committee. Paul explained how the Pinnacle works on projects via committee using the Athens Dome as an example.

5. Herrick's Cove and CT River

Wildlife Festival: the first Sunday in May, May 1. Green Up Day is Saturday, May 7, 2016, the following weekend. The RCC decided to promote Green Up Day and the riparian planting with one table. Devin, Tom, and Amy agreed to turn up and provide information and Green Up bags. Devin will contact Alma Beals. Tom will provide tables, chairs and manpower to set up and take down.

Detention Center and participating in the Permitting Process: Mike asked the RCC whether they wished to comment on the Justice Center impact on Herricks Cove. #8 in the roles of Vermont conservation commissions: to advise the Planning Commission on permits. Chuck Wise suggested to Mike that the RCC could focus on plantings and screening the building, lighting, and similar issues regarding natural resources. Mike handed out maps and the application for the zoning permit. Screening between Herricks Cove and the Center for the four story building will be challenging. Tom spoke to the aesthetic impact from the Connecticut River. Mike is concerned about non-point source impact— drainage issues from the large building and the parking lot. The Commons article names Herricks Cove as one of 20 sites around the state very important to migratory birds. The Natural Resource Overlay District is designed to protect; the Justice Center site is close to the Overlay

District, though not part of it. Mike has written to the Act 250 staff to clarify whether the RCC could have party status; should we provide input through the selectboard or the planning board? Aesthetics are considered in Act 250. Act 250 permits have 10 criteria, including agriculture soils, wetlands, wildlife, aesthetics.

**Tom moved that the RCC take an advisory role to the Planning Commission in the process of siting the proposed justice center at the location adjacent to Herricks Cove; the RCC will seek participation in the Act 250 process if appropriate. Guy seconded the motion.** It isn't clear whether the RCC can have party status without the permission of the selectboard. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Implementation of the RCC vote: the Justice Center is on the agenda for the March 23 Planning Commission meeting. Public hearing site plan review is scheduled. Mike will follow up with Chuck Wise to see how we participate. The RCC agreed Mike Ghia and Tom Hernon should attend the meeting and speak for the RCC. Broad list of RCC concerns includes aesthetics and the view from the Cove; noise impact on wildlife; screening; runoff and pollution into the river; light pollution. Upper Meadows are part of the Basin Plan. Mike will research whether the site has important agriculture soils. Tom feels a decision about the site for the Justice Center will be made quickly, perhaps at the meeting. Involvement early in the site review process may lend legitimacy to our interest in having party status in the Act 250 process. Mike asked anyone interested in providing more issues to email him.

#### 6. Energy Committee

PACE in Rockingham—Town Meeting Vote, implementation and follow-up. Guy reported Phase 1 of PACE was passed at the Rockingham Town Meeting. Mark Kelly from Efficiency Vermont will attend the selectboard meeting at 6:30, March 15, to present Phase 2. Brattleboro has paved the way by discussing the issues with PACE and Efficiency Vermont. The Town must make a formal application to Efficiency Vermont. Guy anticipates a vote tomorrow unless the board wants to delay for more research.

Municipal Solar Research Initiative: Devin, Tom, and Guy have not met.

#### 7. Natural Resources

Vernal Pool Presentation Review and Planning Field Visit and Wildflower walk: Rockingham Library program was held with modest attendance. Peter and Paul attended. A walk to see vernal pools would have to happen very soon, given the warm weather. There are 2 vernal pools on Shepherd Lane above Vermont Academy. If Paul and his wife give the walk, Mike will fire up Mail Chimp. Discussion of how organizations can network to create a joint audience.

Saxtons River Watershed Collaborative Grant Follow-up: Tree planting Planning. Devin, Peter and Tom have been working on the plan. Devin reported that Jolene Hamilton (Windham Natural Resource Conservation District) has helped with species and what goes where. VT Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) holds the conservation easement on the property; the town owns the property. The contract requires creating a management plan for the property. FEMA and VHCB provided funds to buy out the property. FEMA has deed restrictions to prevent certain kinds of development. The riparian value of the property must be maintained. Devin is writing a draft plan which Peter will edit. Plan calls for 400 trees to the acre. Devin researched white papers from the NRCS and he suggests including American Plum and Mulberry, endangered species in Vermont. Jolene will stake the site out for planting, probably in April. Mike recommended Drew of the

Conservation Service and the state river engineer to advise on how to protect the area and river's edge. Peter and Devin have been working on creating a volunteer group to plant and mulch; Jolene has talked about providing hand equipment for volunteers. Friday, May 6, is the proposed date for the planting with 20 Americorps volunteers. Tom offered to talk to the Scott Farrar at the Howard Dean Tech Center to see if the horticulture students would be interested. Paul talked about the need for careful planting, soil additions, watering to help the trees survive. Devin is bringing elderberry and willow cuttings for the bank. Jolene is providing mats which prevent some competition from other species. Devin is talking to Mike Hines about mulch; Gary Derosia at Recycling may be helpful. Alma Beals recommended a Grafton program to remediate knotweed. Tom said Kelly Stetner in Black River has worked on knotweed. Devin will keep the RCC informed.

Update on Stream and Water Body Naming Project –Hearings, Mapping, The Geographic Naming group of the Department of Libraries plans a meeting possibly in Rockingham in July 2016. Peter Bergstrom is following up.

Green Up Day for Rockingham: Guy and Amy are planning to meet with Ed Dinnany about task list.

8. Announcements of Events of relevance to the RCC Mission- no discussion

9. Confirm NEXT MEETING Monday, April 18<sup>th</sup> (3<sup>rd</sup> Monday due to SR Village Meeting) The Village of Saxtons River has its meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of April; all present agreed to hold the RCC meeting on the third Monday of April.

**Guy moved to adjourn the meeting at 9 pm. Devin seconded the motion. The motion passed and the meeting adjourned.**

Submitted,  
Amy Howlett, serving as clerk