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## **Rockingham Conservation Commission**

MONDAY, July 11, 2016

7:00 pm

Mike Ghia called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

Present: Mike Ghia, Tom Herson, Guy Payne, Peter Bergstrom, Amy Howlett, and Devin Smith, Paul Wilson

Absent: Fred Bennett

1. Approve Minutes of May Meeting

Amy moved approval of May 9 minutes, Guy seconded, passed.

2. Recruitment and Logistics

Still looking for a new member. Facebook page posts continue to generate interest.

3. Coordination with Planning Commission

Chuck Wise invited us to a presentation by VLCT on Wed. July 27 at 7:00 PM about whether Planning & Zoning functions should be split into two boards in Rockingham. He also recommended that we reconsider the natural resources protection for Herricks Cove, to protect the whole cove; a letter recommending this from the RCC would be helpful. He said the Technical Update to the Town Plan will be done soon, and after that the Planning Commission wants our help in revising the Town Plan.

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

No progress to report.

5. CT River

Tom reported that the CT River Joint Commission (CRJC) is meeting tomorrow night (July 12) and will discuss proposed changes to NH shoreline protection guidelines and rules.

6. Energy Committee

Municipal Solar Research Initiative Continued--Gravel Pit Proposal by Green Lantern

Ralph Meima attended and gave us a copy of his leasing proposal to the town from May 24. Ralph does site development and customer interactions for Green Lantern. He showed us a conceptual array design for 500 KW (the maximum size for net metering in VT) at the Rockingham town-owned gravel pit on VT 103, which would cover about 3.9 acres. Next step would be for the town to sign an option to lease the site for 6 months, so

Green Lantern could do its feasibility studies, and could build in 2017 if approved. We discussed whether Rockingham and/or Bellows Falls would be users (“off-takers”) of the power generated, through net metering credits (they would get a discount of about 10% on electricity by using the credits). The town could also buy the solar array after it is fully depreciated, after 6-7 years, and get 100% of the credits but lose the lease income. The array will generate about \$140,000 worth of electricity a year. There appear to be adequate power lines nearby on VT 103. Green Lantern will put an 8-foot fence around the site. Total project cost would be about \$1.7 million.

**Motion** by Paul Wilson, seconded by Amy Howlett: That the RCC supports the concept of the proposed solar array and recommends to Chip Stearns that he negotiate the Option to Lease agreement with Green Lantern for the Town.

This was approved unanimously.

**Motion** by Mike Ghia, seconded by Tom Herson: We feel it would be appropriate for the RCC to consult and advise the Town Manager in future negotiations with Green Lantern on this project. Issues of concern include:

- The town should have the right of first refusal or an option to buy the project
- Examine the annual lease rate to see if it is appropriate.
- We recommend that the Town pursue the option to be an off-taker.
- If the town is an off-taker, what discount would we get on our electricity?

This was approved unanimously.

#### 7. Other Activities Natural Resources

Follow-up from Saxtons River Tree planting

Peter and Devin reported that they (with Craig Metzler) watered the Rockingham site once using a gas-powered pump belonging to Craig on June 27 & 28. The Westminster site was watered once by a town water truck about a week before that. We’ve had almost 3” of rain in July so the trees should be OK for a while.

Update on Stream and Water Body Naming Project –Getting Approval and Follow-up  
Peter reported that the public hearing by the VT State Library Board is tomorrow morning. Main issue is whether the falls in Brockways Mills will be named “Brockways Mills Falls” (a name found in some waterfall guides and preferred by ANR staff) or “Sokoki Falls” (the name of the local Abenaki band, proposed by Steve Crofter and approved by the Rockingham Selectboard.) Peter circulated and explained the one-page handout he will use tomorrow.

8. Confirm NO meeting in August NEXT MEETING Monday, September 12<sup>th</sup>.

Adjourned at 9:30—moved by Guy Payne.

Respectfully submitted by Peter Bergstrom, Secretary, July 12, 2016